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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 28, 2022

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

• (1105)

[*English*]

REVOCATION OF THE DECLARATION OF A PUBLIC ORDER EMERGENCY

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) and subsection 61(1) of the Emergencies Act, I am tabling, in both official languages, the proclamation revoking the declaration of a public order emergency.

I ask that these documents be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, pursuant to Standing Order 32(5).

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Before proceeding, I would like to draw the House's attention to an unusual situation.

[*English*]

Members will note that a motion for revocation of the declaration of a public order emergency was filed with the Chair on February 21, in accordance with subsection 59(1) of the Emergencies Act. When it was filed with the Chair, the motion respected the criteria for being put on notice and was admissible. However, the declaration of a public order emergency was revoked by proclamation on February 23, 2022, between the time the motion was filed with the Chair and the time the House returned.

[*Translation*]

As we have seen in recent days, the act provides various control mechanisms allowing Parliament to confirm, revoke and continue a declaration of emergency. The primary vehicle of parliamentary control is a debate culminating in a decision taken on one of those three actions.

[*English*]

The motion filed with the Chair is expressly to revoke the declaration of a public order emergency, as of the date on which the motion would be adopted, even though the declaration is no longer in effect. Since there is no longer any reason for the motion, it has become null and void. The Chair thus orders that the order for consid-

eration of the motion be discharged and that the motion be dropped from the Order Paper.

[*Translation*]

I thank members for their attention.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The House will soon begin Private Members' Business for the first time in this Parliament. I would therefore like to make a brief statement to remind all members about the procedures governing Private Members' Business and the responsibilities of the Chair in the management of this process.

[*English*]

As members know, certain constitutional and procedural realities constrain the Speaker and members insofar as legislation is concerned. One such procedural point concerns whether or not a private member's bill requires a royal recommendation. The Speaker has underscored this issue numerous times in past Parliaments.

As noted on page 835 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition:

Under the Canadian system of government, the Crown alone initiates all public expenditure and Parliament may authorize only spending which has been recommended by the Governor General. This prerogative, referred to as the "financial initiative of the Crown", is the basis essential to the system of responsible government and is signified by way of the "royal recommendation".

[*Translation*]

The requirement for a royal recommendation is grounded in section 54 of the Constitution Act, 1867. Its language echoes Standing Order 79(1), which reads:

This House shall not adopt or pass any vote, resolution, address or bill for the appropriation of any part of the public revenue, or of any tax or impost, to any purpose that has not been first recommended to the House by a message from the Governor General in the session in which such vote, resolution, address or bill is proposed.

As a result, any bill proposing to spend public funds for a new and distinct purpose, or effecting an appropriation of public funds, must be accompanied by a message from the Governor General approving the expenditure. This message, known formally as the royal recommendation, can only be transmitted to the House by a minister of the Crown.

Private Members' Business

● (1110)

[English]

A private member's bill that requires a royal recommendation may be introduced and considered right up until third reading on the assumption that a royal recommendation will be provided by a minister. However, if none is produced by the conclusion of the third reading stage, the Speaker may not put the question for passage at third reading.

Following the establishment or the replenishment of the order of precedence, the Chair has developed a practice of reviewing items so that the House can be alerted to bills that, at first glance, appear to infringe on the financial prerogative of the Crown. The aim of this practice is to allow members the opportunity to intervene in a timely fashion to present their views about the need for those bills to be accompanied or not by a royal recommendation.

[Translation]

The order of precedence having been established on February 9, 2022, I wish to inform the House of two bills which preoccupy the Chair. These are: Bill C-215, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (illness, injury or quarantine), standing in the name of the member for Lévis—Lotbinière; and Bill C-237, an act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act and the Canada Health Act, standing in the name of the member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel.

I would encourage members who would like to make arguments regarding the requirement for a royal recommendation with respect to these bills, or with regard to any other bill now on the order of precedence, to do so at an early opportunity.

[English]

I thank all the members for their attention.

* * *

PERMANENT RESIDENCY FOR TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should develop and publicly release within 120 days following the adoption of this motion a comprehensive plan to expand pathways to permanent residency for temporary foreign workers, including international students, with significant Canadian work experience in sectors with persistent labour shortages, and such plan should incorporate the following elements:

- (a) amending eligibility criteria under economic immigration programs to give more weight to significant in-Canada work experience and expand the eligible occupational categories and work experience at various skills levels;
- (b) examining evidence and data gathered from recent programs such as Temporary Resident to Permanent Resident Pathway, Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP), Rural and Northern Immigration Program (RNIP), and Agri-Food Pilot, and Provincial Nominee Process (PNP);
- (c) incorporating data on labour market and skills shortages to align policy on immigrant-selection with persistent labour gaps;
- (d) assessing ways to increase geographic distribution of immigration and encourage immigrant retention in smaller communities, as well as increase Franco-phone immigration outside Quebec;
- (e) identifying mechanisms for ensuring flexibility in immigration-selection tools to react quicker to changes in labour market needs and regional economic priorities; and

(f) specifically considering occupations and essential sectors that are underrepresented in current economic immigration programs, such as health services, agriculture, manufacturing, service industry, trades, and transportation.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak to members today regarding my private member's motion, Motion No. 44, on expanded pathways to permanent residency for temporary foreign workers.

I have to say that it came as quite a surprise to be chosen first overall in the private members' business lottery last fall. In fact, I was in the government lobby when the member of Parliament for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine came in and said I was number one. Then everyone under the sun started yelling and calling my family to tell them that I won the lottery. Anyhow, my wife is still waiting for the cheque to arrive and I think she will be waiting for some time.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all those individuals and organizations that reached out and shared their important ideas for possible bills and motions with me. I did not take this decision lightly, and I hope that this motion will make a meaningful impact in the lives of families and communities, not just in Surrey Centre, but across the country from coast to coast to coast.

Motion No. 44 would address ongoing challenges with our immigration system, filling critical gaps in our labour market by creating more accessible pathways to permanent residency for temporary foreign workers. Since I was elected in 2015, a constant theme in my office has been seeing employers in need of employees. Employers from a wide variety of sectors, including agriculture, transportation, manufacturing and more, are desperate for employees to fill persistent gaps in our labour market.

I wanted to do something that helps the Canadian economy and our small and medium-sized businesses fill employment gaps and live up to Canada's reputation as a country with a nation-building immigration policy. The goal of our immigration system is to support economic growth by bringing people to Canada.

Canada's population is aging and domestically we have a low birth rate. Some estimate that by 2030 our population growth will come exclusively from immigration. We are already seeing evidence of this with statistics from 2018 and 2019, which show that immigration was responsible for the employment growth across the country. Currently, immigration accounts for almost 100% of Canada's labour force growth and 75% of Canada's population growth, which is mostly in the economic category.

One thing is clear from my experience as a member of Parliament over the last six years: Canada needs workers and Canada needs immigration. By making permanent residency more accessible to more individuals who have devoted time and energy and made sacrifices for the benefit of our communities and our economy, we will help our country flourish and grow.

Our government, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and IRCC work hard to address the challenges faced in our immigration system. With the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, those challenges were exacerbated. However, despite the difficulties we faced and continue to face in this pandemic and rapidly changing world, we have seen improvements and increases in our immigration numbers.

Last December, IRCC announced that we had surpassed our target of welcoming 401,000 immigrants or new permanent residents in 2021 as part of the 2021–23 immigration levels plan. This is the highest number of newcomers welcomed to Canada, surpassing the previous record set in 1913.

What is the temporary foreign worker program? I am sure most members in this chamber are very familiar with the temporary foreign worker program through work in their constituency offices. The temporary foreign worker program is an important and essential part of Canada's immigration system. It allows Canadian employers to open temporary jobs to foreign workers when Canadians are unable to fill the positions.

My constituency office in Surrey Centre receives a staggering number of these files each year. My team estimates that we work on an average of 250 to 300 temporary worker files annually. Many of these requests are from local businesses and employers who are desperate to fill persistent labour shortages in our community.

Employers wishing to hire temporary foreign workers go through a rigorous process of completing a labour market impact assessment, also known as an LMIA, to find out the potential impact that temporary foreign workers would have on the Canadian labour market. The LMIA consists of assessing the regional and occupational labour market information and the employers' efforts to recruit and advertise for the position, as well as working conditions, wages, labour shortages and the transfer of skills and knowledge to Canada.

● (1115)

Canada approved 550,000 temporary foreign worker applications in 2017. Despite this seemingly large number of individuals coming to Canada each year as TFWs, it is not enough, and we need to do more to find employees to fill job vacancies.

According to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration's June 2021 report, "Immigration Programs to Meet Labour Market Needs", there are several sectors and regions in Canada experiencing labour shortages. Immigration policy, as it stands, is not meeting the needs of the labour market. Health services, agriculture, manufacturing, service industries, trades and transportation are particularly vulnerable to being under-represented in our current economic immigration programs.

The COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the beginning months, exposed the delicate nature of our temporary foreign worker programs. Thousands of TFWs stepped up to make sure our seniors received care, trucks kept moving, grocery stores were stocked and restaurants stayed open. Many faced delays renewing their permits. They were uncertain of their status and uncertain if they would remain employed. However, they remained steadfast and helped to keep our country moving and functioning.

Private Members' Business

In its report, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration urged IRCC to make more accessible pathways to permanent residence available in order to prevent the abuse of foreign workers with the precarious status of out-of-status individuals.

Temporary foreign workers are hard-working individuals. They face the risk of exploitation and challenging work environments, and are important contributors to the communities they live in. Unfortunately, for all the risk they face, and the hard work and sacrifices they make for our community and economy, they do not receive adequate reward for their efforts, in my opinion.

Another persistent obstacle faced by temporary foreign workers and their employers includes the need to renew every two years. This means that employers and workers have to go through the process frequently. Employers must make new LMIA applications and advertise extensively. Once they receive approval, which can take months, they have to get the employees to apply for new work permits, which takes months again, adding to uncertainty and stress as many TFWs do not know if they have medical benefits or whether their children can attend school until their approvals are processed. This process is repeated several times, as those who this motion wishes to address have no pathway to permanent residency.

TFWs also face challenges to qualify for permanent residency. Despite their valuable contributions to our communities and economy, and great employment records over a number of years working in this country, obstacles like a lack of higher education and low language testing scores put TFWs at a disadvantage. This can be more frustrating for temporary foreign workers and their families as their language and skills are sufficient for the work they do, but not enough to grant them permanent residency. They may have working language skills, but not a high enough IELTS score. They may have a class one driver's licence to drive long-haul trucking, but only a grade 12 education and therefore may not meet the requisite point score. Imagine the frustration of both the employee and employer when a person is good enough to do a job, but not good enough to become a permanent resident of this country.

Private Members' Business

Many of the industries I have mentioned today fall under NOC levels C and D. This is the national occupational classification system, which classifies jobs based on the type of job duties and the work a person does. NOC level C jobs are intermediate jobs that usually require high school and/or job-specific training, such as long-haul truck drivers or food and beverage servers. Level D consists of labour jobs that usually give on-the-job training, such as fruit pickers, cleaning staff and oil field workers.

NOC levels C and D provide some options for pathways to permanent residency. During the pandemic, our government introduced the temporary residence to permanent residence, TR to PR, pathways. These were created to help admit immigrants during the pandemic. Alternatively, NOC level C and D recipients can apply through the provincial nominee program, which allows Canadian provinces and territories to create their own immigration programs tailored to their economic and population growth strategies. There are also a variety of other regional and industry-specific programs, such as the agri-food pilot and the rural and northern immigration pilot program.

• (1120)

These pathways exist, but we need to do more. We need to add immigration programs that are going to meet our present and future economic needs. Thinking about the pandemic and the challenges Canada faced to get workers into the agriculture industry in the early months, we need to work towards creating a more agile immigration system that can respond quickly to changing situations.

When we look more closely at individual industries, such as the agriculture industry, for example, we can see the real strain that labour shortages are creating. This year, I saw blueberry farmers who normally hand-picked a large portion of their berries forced to machine-pick their crops as there was a huge shortage of farm workers.

Similarly, the heat wave that swooped over B.C. ripened cherries from southern B.C. to the Okanagan at exactly the same time, causing a massive labour pinch. Everyone needed workers at the exact same time. Processors had to increase their workforce due to the increased demand, however with COVID travel restrictions, it became difficult to get much-needed workers in a timely manner.

The agri-food pilot was introduced more than three years ago. To be eligible, individuals require at least 12 months of full-time, non-seasonal Canadian work experience in an eligible occupation and an English or French language proficiency of at least a CLB level 4, as well as a high school education.

The agri-food industry is more than just food production. It includes all aspects of getting food from the field to our tables, and includes delivery and sales, which are a big part of this \$111 billion a year industry. This is more than 6% of Canada's GDP. It also creates 2.3 million jobs.

Keeping all of this in mind, with my private member's motion No. M-44, expanded pathways to permanent residency for temporary foreign workers, I am asking that should this motion be adopted, our government develop and publicly release a comprehensive plan to expand pathways to permanent residency for temporary foreign workers within 120 days. This should include international

students with significant work experience in sectors with persistent labour shortages.

I ask that the eligibility criteria be amended under the economic immigration programs to give more weight to significant in-Canada work experience and expand the eligible occupational categories and work experience at various levels. I am also asking that language requirements be relaxed. These workers have been able to conduct their work in a manner satisfactory to their employers and Canadian workplace safety standards; therefore, they should be considered sufficient to be permanent residents of Canada.

This plan should also examine evidence and data gathered from recent programs such as TRPR, the Atlantic immigration program, the rural and northern immigration pilot, the agri-food pilot and the provincial nominee program. It should also incorporate this data on labour markets and skills shortages to align policy on immigrant selection with persistent labour gaps. These programs and data will provide important region- and industry-specific data to align policy with the diverse needs across our country to ensure appropriate geographic distribution of immigration and encourage immigrant retention in smaller communities. We are a country of not only geographic diversity but also linguistic diversity. This plan should also find ways to increase francophone immigration across Canada.

While we continue to upgrade our immigration system, we have a lot of work to do keep up with the demand. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed shortcomings in our ability to adapt quickly to the rapidly changing world. That is why identifying mechanisms for ensuring flexibility in our immigration selection tools to react more quickly to labour market needs and regional economic priorities is important.

Finally, I am asking for our government to consider specific occupations and essential sectors that are under-represented in the current economic immigration programs, such as health services, agriculture, manufacturing, the service industry, trades and transportation.

We know the growth and stability of our communities and economy rely on the work and dedication of immigrants coming to this country. We need to continue to create mechanisms in our systems to ensure that Canada is an attractive and accessible place for temporary foreign workers to call home.

Private Members' Business

I hope I can count on members' support for Motion No. M-44, expanded pathways to permanent residency for temporary foreign workers. I look forward to the remainder of the debate today.

• (1125)

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for Surrey Centre for raising what I believe is a very important subject. He mentioned during his remarks about 250-300 LMIA temporary foreign worker cases. My riding is very similar to his in that respect.

One of the big concerns, when those applications come to my office, is the reality of abuse with foreign workers. Many of them have to pay their employers for applications the employers should be paying for under law. That is a real concern.

Under the motion, would it be the will of the member opposite that, moving forward, future foreign workers apply directly to the Government of Canada or through an employer?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue. LMIA abuse has been persistent and we have all seen it, in particular in our regions. There are related mechanisms whereby employees can complain and get an open work permit if their employers are abusing them, misusing their funds or misrepresenting their salaries. They have other ways to contact CBSA, and we have made it more flexible. The agency that governs all consultants has been revamped to be a government-regulated organization and given good teeth so it can go after that. We need to give more education to a lot of these temporary foreign workers so that they know those rights and they avail themselves of those rights.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the media, in Quebec in particular, has reported a very high rate of rejection—up to 80%—for temporary permit applications from francophone African countries. Ostensibly, the government is concerned that these people may want to stay in Canada, so it does not want to give them temporary residency. Anglophone colleges, however, are advertising that they can facilitate access to permanent residency.

I think the Department of Immigration really needs to work hard to make sure that it stops discriminating against francophones when it grants temporary study permits.

[*English*]

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, it is very important that the system be fair, and that we have people from both official languages who are applying to come into Canada to work be able to get that temporary foreign worker permit status and get a pathway to immigration.

That is why I have added, in my motion, francophonie populations even outside of Quebec. The reason I say “outside of Quebec” is because Quebec has its will to govern and accept immigrants according to the way it wants. I would like other pockets, such as in Edmonton and on the Lower Mainland, where there are significant francophone populations, also to have the ability to have workers come from that. I hope that those high-refusal rates are turned around and changed for the better.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Surrey Centre for his motion. As he knows, part of the problem with our immigration system is that, over the years, Canada has changed the permanent immigration stream for economic workers to only high-skilled workers. The reality is that Canada needs the full range of workers. As we learned in the COVID period, many of these workers are, in fact, essential. They put food on our tables and support our community and our economy.

To that end, would the member support an amendment to his motion? I would like to propose:

That the motion be amended: (a) by adding after the words “comprehensive plan to expand” the following: “the economic immigration stream to allow workers of all skill levels to meet the full range of labour needs”; and (b) in paragraph (f), by adding the word “caregivers” after the words “health services”.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, I have worked with the member for Vancouver East extensively for almost four years on the citizenship and immigration committee. She has worked very hard and passionately.

I would be more than happy to accept the amendments. We need to have pathways for all temporary foreign workers to get permanent residency in Canada, including caregivers.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon colleague from Surrey Centre, first and foremost for bringing forward this motion, and also to congratulate him on being number one on the list. It is a rare win, so I wish him big congratulations. Most importantly, I thank him for bringing such a thoughtful bill forward.

Even before the pandemic, essential sectors in Canada's economy faced a labour shortage crisis. The agriculture, transportation, food processing, and hospitality and tourism sectors are all still dealing with gaps in their workforces. These are vital industries for our recovery, and all of them have faced hit after hit: rising inflation, ongoing COVID restrictions and the historic Liberal-made backlog, with nearly two million people stuck and waiting to finally have their cases processed.

Looking forward, attracting new and skilled workers to come to Canada and eventually become permanent residents is key to recovery and growth for Canada. In the fall of 2020 I, along with witness Raj Sharma, an immigration lawyer, recommended at the citizenship and immigration committee that the government create a pathway for temporary residents to become permanent residents. With too many people stuck in the immigration backlog, providing this pathway would be a more efficient way of processing cases.

Private Members' Business

Temporary residents are already 50% of the way through the bureaucratic maze of Canadian immigration. This is also a very key Conservative principle, which is that since these people are already 50% processed, it would take fewer resources to make them permanent. Another reason this makes sense is that temporary residents have experienced living and working in Canada, and they are adjusting to the diverse experiences and opportunities our country offers.

I also want to note that the temporary residents here on work permits are also the ones who were transporting goods and medical supplies throughout the pandemic. They worked on farms and processing plants to help keep food on our tables. They work tough jobs and often get little thanks for what they do.

During the first wave, I remember hearing about truckers who drove across the country with almost nowhere to stop to use the bathroom, yet they kept rolling to deliver supplies, and that kept our economy running, our hospitals stocked and our plates full. The positive impact of temporary foreign workers on our economy is immense. They mostly do the jobs everyday Canadians do not want to do.

We have seen that even with high unemployment throughout the last couple of years, many sectors that rely on temporary foreign workers were left with massive labour shortages. This motion is a step in the right direction, but we need a concrete plan now. Hotels, tourism companies, restaurants and Canadian communities are already preparing for the summer. They need to know if they will have the workers they need to meet the tourism demand in Canada. This is a significant concern, not just because of the historic Liberal-made backlog at IRCC but also because of the collapse of the LMIA process for temporary foreign workers.

Employment and Social Development Canada is also failing to modernize, adapt and prepare for the future of immigration in Canada. Just like IRCC, ESDC continues to be stuck in its ways. At the immigration committee last spring, we made recommendations for those departments to reform the LMIA process. Unfortunately, so far none of those recommendations has been acted upon. We heard testimony about agriculture operations submitting LMIA applications 18 months before they needed the workers. Unfortunately, those businesses would not have the labour that they needed.

My colleagues and I have seen first-hand how the LMIA process and the IRCC backlog have affected temporary foreign workers and Canadian employers. Across Canada, TFWs, temporary foreign workers, who had applied for extensions to work permits have had their LMIA's stuck in processing. Instead of IRCC communicating with ESDC, asking if workers and employees had ongoing applications, immigration officials gave 90-day notices telling workers to leave the country.

Today, many jobs TFWs work are not seasonal. Food processing plants need workers year-round; greenhouses and livestock operations are 12-month operations; and even some hospitality jobs require workers to be here throughout the winter. In a time when we are facing a labour shortage crisis in Canada, we cannot allow ourselves to think about temporary solutions.

That is why we need a pathway, a way to end the cycle of bureaucratic mix-ups and massive backlogs. If temporary residents are given a step-by-step program, they can plan their lives accordingly, and so can businesses. Canada needs to attract labour to this country. We need the skill. We need the talent.

• (1135)

I quickly want to address the TR to PR pathway the government created in response to the recommendations witnesses and I made in the fall of 2020. I want to make it clear that any pathway to PR for temporary foreign workers should not follow that example. We heard from many applicants about how much of a mess the process was.

IRCC did not release the application instructions in advance when the portal opened up last spring, which left people scrambling to get their documents in order and book a language test at the last minute. Those language tests booked up extremely fast, and most English classes could not handle the load put on them. What is worse is that immigration consultants and lawyers could not submit applications on behalf of temporary residents, which meant that those workers had to take time off to fill out an application without assistance from an immigration expert and hope they got it right.

The truth is that we know that many applicants unknowingly made mistakes. For example, English-speaking people who applied to full streams automatically went into the French-speaking streams. However, instead of IRCC making that mistake known to temporary residents who applied, it denied those applications. I had business owners calling me, upset that their employees had to take time away from work only to get rejected from this pathway because of unnecessary clerical errors. I agree that it was a failure by this government.

Red tape and miscommunication seem to be a theme the Liberal immigration system has encompassed, and so is racism. The Pollara report on racism at IRCC was disturbing. Employees heard department managers calling some African countries the "dirty 30". It made me sad to hear this, and I am embarrassed for the immigration officers who try to do a good job.

Recently, the citizenship and immigration committee undertook a study to look at the alarmingly high student visa refusal rates, particularly in Francophonie African countries. In some west African countries, the refusal rate is 90%. A lot of that has to do with discrimination and bias. The committee heard from witnesses that many international students were being turned away because of dual intent. IRCC officers were not satisfied that those students would return to their home countries in Africa. This is after the Liberals promised to bring in more international students and provide them with a pathway to permanent residency.

The Minister of Immigration needs to take this issue seriously. Francophone and African international students are studying in all parts of this country. In my home province of Alberta, we see vibrant and strong Francophonie and African communities, and they contribute to the success of our province and country.

The truth is that the dual intent issue is not just a problem for international students but also for temporary foreign workers and other temporary residents. Moreover, it is often an issue for immigrants from developing countries. How can Canada build a pathway to permanent residency if our system will turn around and discriminate and refuse the very people we are recruiting to come here?

It is no secret that I am for smart, responsible and transparent immigration, but I am also in favour of red tape reduction, being efficient and showing compassion. I support a pathway to permanent residence to temporary residents already living and working in Canada. Those people work hard, contribute to the growth and productivity of our country and strengthen our democracy. This pathway makes sense. Why would Canada attract the best and brightest, provide them with opportunities and training and knowledge, and then force them to leave?

While I will be voting for the motion before us, I want to make my concerns clear to my hon. colleague across the way and to the Minister of Immigration. We must develop a fair and compassionate pathway that addresses the labour and economic needs of every province and industry in Canada and helps to reduce the historic backlog. We need real action to end racism at IRCC, and the department needs to be open about its mistakes.

We also need to address this massive backlog, because families are being separated and kept apart from each other. There are families who cannot see their children's first steps, birthdays and other milestones. Canadian businesses are not able to fill the shortages they have for labour and, more importantly, our economy is suffering. We need to clear up this backlog, and this government needs to take that issue very seriously.

This is an opportunity for the government to fix its mistakes and help our businesses and communities grow and thrive. I hope to see a pathway that will help end the labour shortages and grow the economy from coast to coast.

• (1140)

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Surrey—Newton.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

Private Members' Business

The member talked about the backlog. However, I would remind the member that when the Conservatives were in power, it was taking—

The Deputy Speaker: I made a mistake. There are no questions and comments on this one. We have them only on the first round. I apologize to the member for Surrey—Newton.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to express my solidarity with the people of Ukraine and let them know that my thoughts are with them.

Slava Ukraini. Heroyam Slava.

I rise today to speak to Motion No. 44 moved by my colleague from Surrey Centre. The motion deals with permanent residency for temporary foreign workers.

My colleague's motion deserves special attention because it pertains to immigration, which is crucial for both Quebec and Canada. Every legislative decision related to immigration is likely to have profound and far-reaching consequences on our societies, both in the short and long terms.

Motion No. 44 can be divided into several sub-issues, which means it needs to be studied and considered from a number of different angles. However, given the limited time I have for my speech today, I will concentrate on two issues that the Bloc Québécois believes are essential for the motion to receive our party's support.

The first issue relates to adding an explicit guarantee to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Canada-Québec Accord relating to Immigration and Temporary Admission of Aliens. That document, which was signed in 1991, has since become the reference for how the Canadian and Quebec governments share responsibilities when it comes to immigration matters.

My Bloc Québécois colleagues and I feel it is crucial to recognize the precedence of the Canada-Quebec accord given point (a) of the motion, which states that the government's proposed plan should include “amending eligibility criteria under economic immigration programs to give more weight to significant in-Canada work experience and expand the eligible occupational categories and work experience at various skills levels”.

Private Members' Business

Amending eligibility criteria under the economic immigration category is the prerogative of Quebec. It is not up to Ottawa to tell Quebec whether such or such criterion should be given more weight, any more than it is up to Ottawa to choose which occupational categories should be given priority. Given its special knowledge of its labour market and the accord signed in that regard more than 30 years ago, it is up to Quebec to determine its own priorities.

I would also like to take this opportunity to draw the House's attention to the part of the preamble to the Canada-Quebec accord that attests to the spirit in which the accord was signed. It states, in black and white, that the accord stems from a joint wish by the Canadian and Quebec governments to "provide Québec with new means to preserve its demographic importance in Canada, and to ensure the integration of immigrants in Québec in a manner that respects the distinct identity of Québec".

After 30 years, I find it hard to believe that Ottawa even remembers the commitment it made. Given that the current Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, who, I would remind the House, is a unilingual anglophone, released an immigration plan in February that would grant permanent status to 1.33 million new immigrants in only three years, the spirit of the 1991 accord is threatened as never before.

Such an abrupt increase in immigration levels would greatly compromise Quebec's ability to maintain its demographic weight, because it would have to accept more than double the number of permanent immigrants it currently takes in. This would accelerate the collapse of the French fact in Montreal, as there would not be enough resources available on the ground to meet the demand for French integration classes. It is a trap for French Quebec.

For these reasons, it is essential that Motion No. 44 explicitly state that it will be implemented in accordance with the rights conferred upon Quebec by the 1991 Canada-Quebec accord, so that the resulting plan will not violate the spirit of this historic agreement.

The second issue concerns point (d) of the motion, which should have read as follows: "assessing ways to increase geographic distribution of immigration and encourage immigrant retention in smaller communities, as well as increase Francophone immigration outside Quebec [and in Quebec]".

• (1145)

As the member of Parliament for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, I am a strong advocate for the regions. I think it is essential to focus on attracting and, most importantly, retaining immigrants in the regions and in smaller communities.

At any given time, the Montreal metropolitan area is home to 80% to 85% of Quebec's immigrant population, even though the area has less than 50% of Quebec's total population.

This imbalance is hurting our communities, which would benefit culturally and collectively from an influx of newcomers from across the Francophonie. This imbalance is hurting our business owners, who are experiencing ever-increasing labour shortages that are undermining the regions' economic viability in the short, medium and long terms. This imbalance is hurting our world-renowned

universities, which are working tirelessly to attract the brightest minds from here and around the world.

It goes without saying that I will support the member for Surrey Centre in his bid to identify and implement measures that will help the regions successfully attract immigrants. My Bloc Québécois colleagues and I will always be in favour of promoting and protecting the French fact across Canada.

That said, we believe something must be done to promote francophone immigration to Quebec. We could not quite believe that was not part of the motion moved by my colleague from Surrey Centre, especially in light of the alarming data released just a few months ago about Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's systemic and systematic discrimination against francophone African students applying to francophone Quebec universities. I would like to share some of the statistics, which speak for themselves.

In my riding, the Université du Québec à Rimouski received over 2,000 applications in 2021. An astounding 71% of them were rejected. Across Quebec, over 80% of applications from certain francophone African countries were rejected. By comparison, rejection rates for Ontario and British Columbia were 37% and 47% respectively in 2020. It is also worth noting that the rate of rejection for applications to anglophone Quebec universities is lower than for francophone universities.

This is inexcusable. Why is the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship discriminating against francophone African students? Why did nobody in the minister's office sound the alarm at some point in the past three years?

These students had already been admitted by Quebec universities and the Quebec government, but the federal government's painful rejection pulled the rug out from under them. Given that obtaining a degree in Quebec is a fast track to permanent residency, this unfair and unjustifiable discrimination against francophone students is further exacerbating the decline of the French fact in Quebec.

I have said it before, and I will say it again. We must not underestimate the challenges facing francophone immigrants. We need to make it easier for them to come to Quebec and the rest of Canada. Ottawa's current study permit approval system is an insult to Quebeckers and all francophones, so it needs an overhaul.

In conclusion, we need to give the subject of Motion No. 44 the attention it deserves. The Bloc Québécois has concerns about how it is being implemented and whether it is consistent with the provisions of the Canada-Quebec accord relating to immigration. The Bloc also wants one of the objectives in the upcoming action plan to be supporting francophone immigration to Quebec.

• (1150)

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the House today regarding Motion No. 44. From our time together at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration during previous sessions, it is clear to me that the member for Surrey Centre is passionate about improving Canada's immigration system. This motion highlights that well. I congratulate the member on being number one.

My colleagues in the NDP and I have long viewed Canada's immigration system as an exercise in nation building. Individuals and families from all corners of the world, for generations, have come to Canada. They have contributed to our communities, our social fabric, our culture and our economy.

In the past, Canada's immigration system offered landed status on arrival for a full range of workers. Unfortunately, successive Liberal and Conservative governments have shifted our system over time to include just what IRCC deems as high-skilled workers. As a result, Canadian employers have struggled to find the full range of workers needed to meet the labour demand, and increasingly, Canada has turned to the temporary foreign worker program. On an annual basis, there are now more temporary foreign workers in the country than there are new landed immigrants.

Twenty years ago, there were 60,000 temporary work permits in Canada. Today, there are over 400,000. As we have witnessed, precarious status immigration streams lead to severe power imbalances, abuse and a fear to speak out. Whether they are the rampant exploitation of live-in caregivers and stories of threats to deport them, which forced program reforms, or the countless stories of workplace rights violations, including wage theft and illegal housing of temporary foreign workers, many of these issues stem from the precarious nature of the immigrant workers community.

The pandemic has really highlighted the fact that temporary foreign workers have been mistreated, and there are two issues I would like to talk about.

The first is that Canadians and our economy heavily rely on access to temporary foreign workers, many of whom are essential workers, even though IRCC defines these workers as low or medium skilled. They work at grocery stores, put food on our tables, care for our loved ones and so much more. Across the board, their value should be recognized with livable wages, secure employment benefits and, as COVID has demonstrated, paid sick leave. However, too often, these essential workers are paid minimum wages. They can only come to Canada as temporary foreign workers and not as immigrants.

This needs to change. That is why the NDP is putting forward an amendment to the motion to expand the economic immigration stream beyond what IRCC deems as high-skilled workers to include the full range of workers. I will be moving that motion at the end of my speech.

The second issue is the continued lack of enforcement of the rules that prevent exploitation and harm to temporary foreign workers. The recent Auditor General's report found that the government assessed almost all employers as compliant with COVID-19 regula-

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tions, even though it had "gathered little or no evidence to demonstrate this". The continuous failure to act to enforce the basic standards, rules and principles of the program tips the scale further in favour of abuse, exploitation, exclusion, and tragically, death.

I do not say that lightly. Whether it is a failure to follow COVID guidelines leading to COVID deaths, or the unsafe work practices that result in the workplace deaths of agriculture workers, the mistreatment of these precarious migrants leads to tragedy each and every year. Many, myself included, have argued for a very long time that the temporary foreign worker program is a complete misnomer.

While it aims to be for filling in labour or skills shortages on a temporary basis, we all know that is not the case. Instead, the program is used to fill permanent jobs with temporary people. The NDP has long agreed with migrant workers organizations that, if one is good enough to work here, one is good enough to stay. That means landed status on arrival and the recognition that the term "low-skilled" does not reflect the value of the work being done. Instead, it is just a term that justifies poor working conditions and low wages.

• (1155)

Eliminating the precarity of status for newcomers and removing the power imbalance created by tying a migrant worker to a specific employer would have an enormous positive impact on the lives of migrant workers overnight, and in the long term, a positive impact for our economy.

As just one example, COVID-19 has exposed a shortage of front-line health care workers in this country. In my years of work advocating for better treatment, the end to forced family separation, and landed status on arrival for migrants arriving through the caregiver stream, I have heard countless stories of how many of these women are trained nurses and caregivers who could not practice because of immigration laws.

It makes no sense that they are not able to practise their profession, even if they have passed all the tests and meet all the credentials. The only thing preventing them from working in their profession is immigration rules. Credential recognition does not help them because they are tied to the job and the employer that got them here. There is no flexibility. That is wrong and should be changed.

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I am also happy to see the member included international students in the motion. The best and brightest young people from around the world come to Canada to study. For some, they want to take the skills they learn here and bring them home to improve their communities, and that is incredible.

However, we also must realize that for some, coming to Canada, obtaining an education here and being immersed in our communities is done with the goal of making Canada their home. While pathways exist, for many, the difficulty of navigating the system and delays for application approvals become serious hindrances to their ability to stay here and work in their field.

For reasons that have never been explained to me, students applying through express entry score lower than they should because any work experience they gain in Canada while studying does not count. This artificially lowers their score and makes it less likely for them to be selected. That too should change.

I would also be remiss if I did not speak to the lack of options that individuals without status have to regularize and obtain valid status. People can be in this country without status for a wide range of reasons. Some are out of their control; some are instances where they believed they were following the rules but were misled and exploited; some have lost status because of delays in the system. The reasons are many. For example, I am aware of caregivers who have lost status due to delays related to COVID in application processing.

There are an estimated 500,000 people already here in Canada without status. Many of them, due to this very precarious situation, are working under the table, not having their rights respected and are being exploited. They are also, in countless cases, working in positions well below the fullest of their abilities because they cannot come forward for positions they are qualified for without status.

We need to change all of that. I will therefore move the following amendment.

I move:

That the motion be amended:

- (a) by adding after the words "comprehensive plan to expand" the following: "the economic immigration stream to allow workers of all skill levels to meet the full range of labour needs"; and
- (b) in paragraph (f), by adding the word "caregivers" after the words "health services".

I thank the member for Surrey Centre for accepting these amendments. I look forward to the plan from the government when the motion passes.

● (1200)

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to inform the hon. member that pursuant to Standing Order 93(3), no amendment may be proposed to a private member's motion or to the motion for second reading of a private member's bill unless the sponsor of the item indicates his or her consent.

Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Surrey Centre if he consents to this amendment being moved.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, I consent to the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment is in order.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to see my colleagues this morning, albeit virtually, and I do wish everyone safe travels as a majority of MPs return for the first sitting week of March.

Today, I will be providing remarks in support of Motion No. 44 on permanent residency for temporary foreign workers. I wish to sincerely congratulate a great colleague, but more importantly a close friend, the member of Parliament for Surrey Centre, for his tireless work in pushing forward this motion and for his advocacy in strengthening all facets of our immigration system. I have had the opportunity to work with the member on immigration, and his interventions are always timely and substantive.

Motion No. 44 develops a plan that is good for the economy and allows us to build a more inclusive and diverse country by attracting and retaining individuals from all over the world with diverse and, I would argue, in-demand skill sets and work experiences. When we speak about skill sets, as demonstrated by the pandemic and over the course of our history as a country, those so-called low-skilled jobs are, in fact, some of the most important in our labour force. Motion No. 44 would provide accessible pathways to permanent residency status to workers who have traditionally been considered as lower skilled. This is the right thing to do economically and morally.

I am the son of immigrants who came and contributed much to this country. My grandparents and their seven children left an impoverished southern Italy in the late 1950s with literally only a suitcase and limited skills, but also with a can-do work attitude, a drive to create a better future for their children and a desire to help build and contribute to this country we call home. Today, they would be viewed low-skilled newcomers, but, frankly, I completely beg to differ.

Before I provide further remarks on Motion Mo. 44, I would like to take a moment to comment on the situation in Ukraine. We are all Ukrainian at this moment in our global history. Our very fundamental belief in liberal democracy and our western values of democracy and self-determination are under attack. They are under attack by a corrupt despot, a corrupt dictator, someone who is dangerous not only to the Ukrainian people, but to his own people. He must be stopped.

Liberal democracies will win and the Ukrainian people will themselves and only themselves determine their future. It is their right of self-determination. This battle is not only about the Ukraine, but about the future of liberal democracies themselves. As stated by a TV commentator last night, "The Ukrainian people have lit a spark that is uniting the world against tyranny."

Returning to Motion No. 44, the motion asks the House to develop and publicly release, within 120 days, a plan that ultimately helps to address the persistent labour shortages seen by employers across Canada. These labour shortages in many sectors of our economy are only anticipated to get worse as literally millions of Canadians exit the labour market for retirement and our birth rate continues to decline. Immigration is imperative not only for building a better and more inclusive country, but also for our economic well-being.

The member for Surrey Centre is correct in identifying a plan to expand pathways to permanent residency for temporary foreign workers, including international students with significant work experience in this country. This is the correct pathway to take. Immigration, for me, should be looked at as a nation-building exercise and not simply as a plug for economic growth. This motion, combined with a number of policy measures we have introduced over the last six years as a government, takes us in that direction.

We know that our government, since 2015, has significantly expanded the absolute levels of newcomers to Canada to now over 400,000 per year and increased the number of pathways, including through the Atlantic immigration pilot, the northern immigration pilot, the agri-food pilot and others. However, we must do more, and Motion No. 44 takes us in that direction.

We are allowing newcomers to come to Canada and bring their entrepreneurial spirit and diverse set of skills, which are in demand. When we look at the components of the motion, which I will spend the rest of my time talking about, I wish to focus on part (a) of the motion. It states:

- (a) amending eligibility criteria under economic immigration programs to give more weight to significant in-Canada work experience and expand the eligible occupational categories and work experience at various skills levels

Frankly, I have advocated for this for many years since becoming a parliamentarian. Having Canadian work experience, to me, is the best indicator of success and the best indicator of future success. On language requirements, let us think about this. How many of our Ukrainian, Portuguese, Italian and Spanish people, and those educated in non-English, non-Commonwealth countries, would be able to come to Canada today? There would not be very many at all.

• (1205)

We know that under express entry, for example, the pathway for individuals who have very high levels of English and, say, a Ph.D. or commensurate academic credentials is easier. However, the fact is that many of the jobs that are unfulfilled and in demand are in skilled trades, hospitality, health care, the agricultural sector, the engineering sector and our manufacturing facilities. All of these sectors are vital to the Canadian economy and our future economic well-being.

For instance, if a temporary foreign worker comes to Canada for a two-year period under an LMIA, as we can imagine, they begin their employment, start putting down roots in their community and begin their integration period in this country. After a two-year period, in the normal course, individuals in a career path or with a NOC code, with an average English skill set, would not be able to remain in Canada because they do not have enough points, maybe because

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they are a little older or because they have not received higher-level education. This is wrong and it needs to change. Motion No. 44 takes us down this route, and I congratulate the member for Surrey Centre for bringing the motion forward.

For example, a concrete finisher, a carpenter or whatever skilled trades individual who comes to Canada could work here for two years but could not stay here permanently. The individual would be under an LMIA for two years but with no clear pathway to remain in this country. That is wrong. This serves as a large disincentive for someone wanting to come to Canada. Uprooting themselves and their families and then being forced to go back is not an investment I or anyone would want to take. We need to re-examine this and give more weight to those working here in Canada, contributing, paying their taxes and, frankly, being awesome citizens. These people are our friends and neighbours and they want to become part of the permanent Canadian landscape.

This pathway would also save employers literally thousands of dollars a year to renew their LMIA and save workers the same. Some applications for LMIAs cost several thousands of dollars. I am not just talking \$2,000 or \$3,000, but \$5,000 or \$6,000. This is an inefficient and bureaucratic process. We must look at ways to streamline our system, and Motion No. 44 would take a large step in that direction.

Another part of the motion that I am very supportive of is part (c):

- incorporating data on labour market and skills shortages to align policy on immigrant-selection with persistent labour gaps

As I was reading through Motion No. 44 this morning and over the weekend, I noted part (c) on data. We are a government that since 2015 has been driven by data and science. We know that when we make good policy decisions that incorporate the most relevant and up-to-date data, we make the right decisions. We know that in our immigration system, we need to make sure we are identifying sectors of the economy that require labour.

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I will give an example in my remaining time. I received a phone call several weeks ago from the owner of one of the largest employers in the city of Vaughan. He is in need of approximately 250 to 300 people to work at his factories. His orders from the United States are overflowing. At the same time, it is very difficult for this individual to find local labour, which is non-existent, to be honest, here in the GTA, and to bring in temporary foreign workers to work in his plant. Why? It is because they are what are called medium-skilled jobs in light manufacturing. However, they create economic success in our country to serve our export markets. My answer to this entrepreneur was that he would have to sponsor each individual through an LMIA process, a very laborious process, so we also need to look at that process.

What Motion No. 44 means is that when we look at the manufacturing sector, the agriculture sector or health services, we need the most up-to-date and relevant data so we can make the best decisions. On the language requirements, which I know the member for Surrey Centre flagged at the beginning, a building could not be put up in downtown Toronto right now if we asked that all the individuals involved had the language requirements to become Canadian citizens. I will leave that thought for all 337 of my colleagues. A building could not be built in downtown Toronto or across the GTA if we asked all the individuals working on the sites to have the English requirements to immigrate to this country today.

I again congratulate the member for Surrey Centre for a job well done.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. The order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

* * *

[*English*]

RUSSIA'S ATTACK ON UKRAINE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion. I move:

That a take-note debate on Russia's egregious attack on Ukraine be held later today, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1, and that, notwithstanding any standing order, special order, or usual practice of the House: (a) members rising to speak during the debate may indicate to the Chair that they will be dividing their time with another member; (b) the time provided for the debate be extended beyond four hours, as needed, to include a minimum of 16 periods of 20 minutes each; and (c) no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say. It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1215)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 9—PARLIAMENTARY REVIEW COMMITTEE PURSUANT TO THE EMERGENCIES ACT

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That,

(a) pursuant to subsection 62(1) of the Emergencies Act, a special joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons be appointed to review the exercise of powers and the performance of duties and functions pursuant to the declaration of emergency that was in effect from Monday, February 14, 2022, to Wednesday, February 23, 2022, including the provisions as specified in subsections 62(5) and (6) of the act;

(b) the committee be composed of four members of the Senate and seven members of the House of Commons, including three members of the House of Commons from the governing party, two members of the House of Commons from the official opposition, one member from the Bloc Québécois and one member from the New Democratic Party, with three Chairs of which the two House Co-Chairs shall be from the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party and the Senate Co-Chair shall be determined by the Senate;

(c) in addition to the Co-Chairs, the committee shall elect two vice-chairs from the House, of whom the first vice-chair shall be from the governing party and the second vice-chair shall be from the official opposition party;

(d) the House of Commons members be named by their respective whip by depositing with the Clerk of the House the list of their members to serve on the committee no later than the day following the adoption of this motion;

(e) the quorum of the committee be seven members whenever a vote, resolution or other decision is taken, so long as both Houses and one member of the governing party in the House, one from the opposition in the House and one member of the Senate are represented, and that the Joint Chairs be authorized to hold meetings, to receive evidence and authorize the printing thereof, whenever five members are present, so long as both Houses and one member of the governing party in the House, one member from the opposition in the House and one member of the Senate are represented;

(f) changes to the membership of the committee, on the part of the House of Commons, be effective immediately after notification by the relevant whip has been filed with the Clerk of the House;

(g) membership substitutions, on the part of the House of Commons, be permitted, if required, in the manner provided for in Standing Order 114(2) and may be filed with the clerk of the committee by email, provided that substitutes take the oath of secrecy pursuant to paragraph (h) of this order before participating in proceedings;

(h) pursuant to subsection 62(3) of the act, every member and person employed in the work of the committee, which includes personnel who, in supporting the committee's work or a committee member's work, have access to the committee's proceedings or documents, shall take the oath of secrecy set out in the schedule of the act;

(i) every meeting of the committee held to consider an order or regulation referred to it pursuant to subsection 61(2) of the act shall be held in camera pursuant to subsection 62(4) of the act, and that the evidence and documents received by the committee related to these meetings shall not be made public;

(j) Co-Chairs shall have the ability to fully participate, including to move motions and to vote on all items before the committee, and any vote resulting in a tie vote shall mean that the item is negated;

(k) all documents deposited pursuant to the act shall be referred to the committee, and documents referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights since February 16, 2022, in accordance with this act be instead referred to this special joint committee;

(l) until the committee ceases to exist on Thursday, June 23, 2022, whichever is earlier,

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(i) where applicable, the provisions contained in paragraph (r) of the order adopted on Thursday, November 25, 2021, except for those listed in subparagraphs (r)(iii), (iv) and (vi), shall apply to the committee, and the committee shall hold meetings in person only should this be necessary to consider any matter referred to it pursuant to subsection 61(2) of the act,

(ii) members, senators, and departmental and parliamentary officials appearing as witnesses before the committee may do so in person, as may any witness appearing with respect to any matter referred to it pursuant to subsection 61(2) of the act,

(iii) when more than one motion is proposed for the election of the House vice-chairs, any motion received after the initial one shall be taken as a notice of motion and such motions shall be put to the committee seriatim until one is adopted;

(m) the committee have the power to:

(i) sit during sittings and adjournments of the House,

(ii) report from time to time, including pursuant to the provisions included in subsection 62(6) of the act, to send for persons, papers and records, and to print such papers and evidence as may be ordered by the committee,

(iii) retain the services of expert, professional, technical and clerical staff, including legal counsel,

(iv) appoint, from among its members such subcommittees as may be deemed appropriate and to delegate to such subcommittees, all or any of its powers, except the power to report to the Senate and House of Commons,

(v) authorize video and audio broadcasting of any or all of its public proceedings and that they be made available to the public via the Parliament of Canada's websites; and

That a message be sent to the Senate requesting that House to unite with this House for the above purpose and to select, if the Senate deems advisable, members to act on the proposed special joint committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is good to rise again to speak to this matter.

I will start by talking about the incredible importance of parliamentary oversight, particularly when we are using something as extraordinary as the Emergencies Act, which was written in 1988 and has never been used in this country. We have lived through a period of the utilization of this act for the first time. When we are talking about establishing a parliamentary review to take a look at how that act was used, it is important that we move quickly. I appreciate the discussions we have been having with other parties, but we are at a bit of an impasse, which leads us to where we are right now in the House.

I think it is important for the context of this motion to talk about the events that led up to the enacting of the act, the period of time that the act was in place, how its powers were used and what the act then demands after the provisions of the act are completed.

For a period of three weeks, all of us who came here to Ottawa witnessed something that was without precedent in Canadian history. The streets of Ottawa were gripped not by a protest but by an occupation that seemed to have no end. Many of us have had an opportunity to go and talk to residents who lived in the red zone or with businesses that were shut down and affected by what happened there. It was totally and utterly unacceptable.

When I came into Ottawa to be back in this place on the Sunday night at the very beginning of this protest, I had seen something on television, but I never really had any sense of the full character of what was going on until I came and saw the streets blocked and talked to folks who owned businesses. Despite having gone through incredible difficulty over 10, 20 or 30 years, they said this was the hardest thing they had ever endured. There were residents who

were afraid to leave their homes. Those who did were witnessing harassment, defecation, urination and just a complete upheaval of their day-to-day normal lives.

If that was not enough, we saw homeless shelters attacked. We saw the desecration of national monuments. We saw swastikas and Confederate flags being flown. This continued ad infinitum: honking horns, disruptions of people's ability to sleep, a complete terrorizing of the local population. What then began to happen was that it spread elsewhere to blockades that blocked critical border crossings, meaning that hundreds of millions of dollars in lost trade were now affecting businesses across the country with further actions being contemplated.

There is no doubt that everyone suffered in this pandemic, some far more than others. For every human on this planet, we are forever going to be united in the collective trauma of having lived through a global pandemic. For me, I am an incredibly social person. I love to be out in the world. It is how I get my energy, being with friends and family. Like everybody else, being cut off from that was exceptionally painful. However, many of the people in the red zone in Ottawa certainly suffered a great deal more than I did over those two years: people who were frontline health care workers and people who lost loved ones. Thank God I did not. I think one of the things the folks who came in protesting forgot was that the lives they were shutting down and the people they were terrorizing had gone through something really hard too.

That takes me to one of the things that was desecrated, which was the memorial to Terry Fox. It makes me reflect upon the nature of freedom generally. Terry Fox was somebody who was diagnosed with, at that time, terminal cancer. He was going to die, and he had a choice about what he was going to do with the days left to him, what he was going to do with the freedom that he had while he still drew breath in this world. Terry Fox made the decision not to be angry, not to shake a fist, not to scream about the injustice of his condition, but to ask the question of how he could lift others from suffering, how he could use his suffering and his pain as a vehicle so that others may not suffer and so that others may not feel pain.

● (1220)

As he raced across the country, he captured the imagination of all of us, appealing to our greatest nature. When we suffer greatly our instinct often is to turn to anger and malice, but there is a deeper part of us that connects to something that I think is more spiritual, that calls for us instead to use our suffering as a way to stop the suffering of others.

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I have to reflect that I am sure the people who came here protesting were suffering. I am sure they had gone through very hard things as many across this country have gone through many hard things, but did they think about the people who were around them, the businesses that were suffering, the people who have been toiling on the front lines of this pandemic, the people who were as desperate as they were for a return to normalcy? I do not think they did. Certainly their actions did not indicate that they did.

That is the thing that bothers me the most about, and I understand that we see this very differently, the disposition of the official opposition on this matter. Cheering on this type of behaviour, this type of lawlessness, this lack of regard for the suffering of others or lack of kinship with trying to lift others out of pain instead of demanding that their pain be heard and felt beyond all other pain regardless of how much more pain it caused, was concerning.

There have been many times when I have seen protests and have sympathized with many of the points that the protesters were making, but then I see the way the protests are being handled or conducted, or I see some of the imagery that some of the people in that crowd have. We have to make a decision not to go among, even when there is a large group of people that we support, when there is lawlessness or affiliation with causes that we disagree with. Some of those choices have been really hard for me because some of those causes that I saw I believed in and I wanted to be among those people.

However, when I saw a flag flown or an image of something that I disagreed with, I understood that my presence there would be confusing. Sometimes some of my colleagues made the other decision to go out among those people where photographs were taken and the Conservative Party pointed out, “What do you stand for? There is somebody in that crowd who stands for this, do they stand for that?” They were attacked on that basis. I had to reflect that it was a fair criticism.

We are at a tenuous time in this country. We are at a tenuous time in this world. We see the events unfolding in Ukraine and we realize that our enemy is not the people at whom I am staring across, as much as we may have vociferous debate and differences. Our enemy is those who would seek to undermine our institutions and throw out our very democracy. There is no doubt that there was sedition in the groups outside. There were those who sought to topple a democratically elected government and replace it with I do not know what.

I do know that the folks who came here and occupied the city for three weeks did not talk a lot about the fact that an election had happened just months ago, where the issues that they were demanding be taken action on had been decided in that very election with the vast majority of parties supporting the measures to fight the pandemic based on science.

I take no joy in not being able to go out to a concert. I take no joy in not being able to go to some of my favourite places with some of my favourite people. We looked at that and said that we had to do it to protect our neighbours, to protect those we loved. We had to make those sacrifices.

It is disappointing to me when I hear the member for Carleton talking about standing with what is going on outside and keeping the momentum going, the interim leader of the Conservatives saying that she does not think we should be asking them to go home, the member for Yorkton—Melville saying it is a show of patriotic passion, or the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex saying what she saw were patriotic, flag-waving Canadians and that it was like Canada Day times a thousand. We have a problem. We have to step back and really consider what we foment. There is in our dialogue the need to look at science and hard decisions and come together, but to support this kind of lawlessness is totally unacceptable.

● (1225)

The Emergencies Act had to be brought to bear to deal with this situation and create a restoration of order, and in its being brought to bear in this unprecedented situation there were three pillars. One was to restore peace and order so that people could resume their normal lives and so that their freedoms were not impugned. Second was that it be done correctly, that it be geographically targeted and that it be used with the minimum amount of invasiveness as possible to achieve its results. Third was that it be time-limited.

We are now seeing a return to normalcy. We are seeing the blockades are over. We are seeing life in Ottawa feeling normal again and people being able to work and live in their communities in a way they were accustomed to. Now that it is over, the act requires two things of us. One is that an inquiry be set up within 60 days to independently verify the use of the act and its appropriateness, and the other is that a joint committee of MPs and senators be established to independently take a look at the actions of the government in the use of this act.

There are two things, then, that would seem like important principles to me in establishing a committee of this nature. One is that given that it is, in fact, the government itself that established the act, I concur the government should not, itself, chair the committee. That is a supposition I support. Secondly, given the actions of the official opposition and its support and cheerleading for the illegal activities that occurred outside this building and blockades across the country, it would be equally inappropriate for the official opposition to act as a chair in reviewing the matters that occurred. Instead, what I think is a fair and reasonable proposal is that the chairmanship be shared by the two other opposition parties, one that did not support the use of the act and one that did, and as this is a joint committee of both the House and the Senate, that the Senate be given the opportunity to appoint one of its members.

In this instance, the committee that we have suggested would actually dial back government representation. We have proposed three Liberal members, two Conservative MPs and one Conservative senator, so that is actually three Conservatives who would sit from their caucus. We have also proposed one member from the Bloc, one from the NDP and one from each of the recognized groups in the Senate. I will just say that the Conservative proposal to only have one senator is completely inappropriate to the other chamber.

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We have to understand, in 1988 when the act was written, the intention of a joint committee of the House was that there would be appropriate representation from both Houses. In 1988 there was a Senate based on parties. The Senate has now moved to a different place, and we know as legislators that the spirit of an act is the most important thing we must focus on, so ensuring there is one representative from each is fair and balanced. The Conservative proposal to only have five members, of which two would be Conservative, one would be Bloc, one would be NDP and one would be Liberal, and for it to be chaired by a Conservative MP and co-chaired by a Conservative senator is not appropriate.

It is essential as we move forward and look at this chapter of history that parliamentary review be done and that this committee be both balanced and impartial in its deliberations. I think what we have put forward demonstrates exactly those principles, and I would say it is time we get to work on that committee.

• (1230)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the challenges we have been dealing with, all of us working on this committee, is the perception, real or otherwise, that the government is trying to stack the deck with this committee. The Conservatives, and I will be speaking about this momentarily, provided a reasonable proposal that would have used an already existing committee, which was purpose-built for this particular purpose. It would have provided a chair to the Conservative side on the members side but also a chair to the Senate side.

I would like the hon. government House leader to explain to the House and Canadians why that committee could not work, given the fact that it is purpose-built, yet his committee, in his view, would.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, in starting off, our first proposal was that we would model it on the MAID committee, which would have meant a government chair. There was a counter-proposal that we would have a Conservative chair, as in the scrutiny of regulations model. My concern, which I outlined clearly in my speech, is that I do not think either of those is appropriate as chair, given the nature of the events as they occurred. As well, the government is the entity that created the use of the act and therefore would not be appropriate to chair—and I agree with that supposition—and the Conservatives had so vociferously argued in support of the protests and their objectives that I do not think they have demonstrated the independence necessary for that model either.

In terms of stacking the deck, I would counter that this suggestion does not add up. We are talking about three Liberal MPs, two Conservative MPs and one Conservative senator—so the Conservatives actually have the same number from their caucus as we have from ours, which is not proportional but actually favours them—as well as one Bloc member and one NDP member, who are overrepresented because it is a small committee, and one senator from each of the Senate groups. Therefore, I do not see that math.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said that we needed an impartial committee to shed light on the matter. I agree.

I would like to know what motivated the government to go ahead with the Emergencies Act knowing that it was a very divisive issue and that its time had perhaps passed. There was no longer an emergency. At the time, was not the government's motivation to restore the Prime Minister's image, since he took action only last week and failed to properly assume the important role he could have played in this crisis?

In my opinion, an impartial committee to shed light on what happened should also take a look at this aspect. I wonder whether the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons agrees with me on this.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, it was a very difficult and unstable situation.

It was obvious, not only from the events in Ottawa, but also the blockades at the border crossings, that this was a threat to the country. It was absolutely essential that the government took action. Fortunately, the situation is now stable here outside the House of Commons, at the border and throughout the country.

Powers like the Emergencies Act are not often used, but it was necessary to do so at the time. It is also important to say that use of the act was very limited, not only in terms of time, but also geographically.

• (1235)

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three questions for my colleague, the government House leader, that I would like answers to.

First, how important is it to have opposition members chairing this important parliamentary review committee? The House leader has said, quite aptly, that the opposition needs to chair this committee, and the government is proposing two opposition chairs. How important is that?

Second, how quickly do we need answers for the people of Ottawa? The government House leader spoke to what we all saw. Thousands of residents of downtown Ottawa, including people with disabilities and seniors, were cut off from essential services. There were assaults and there was vandalism, and hundreds of businesses were closed. How important is it to get those answers to the people of Ottawa to what happened over those three weeks and how devastating the impact was for residents of Ottawa?

[Translation]

Third, my question is simple and concerns how some Conservative members acted during the crisis, inciting and supporting the occupiers, despite the vandalism and violence at the site.

Was it appropriate for the Conservative members to act this way?

[English]

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. I appreciate working with all the House leaders from the different parties on this issue as we try to find consensus.

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Let me take the first point, because I agree with it. At the very beginning in the discussions we had on this issue, as I said, I initially thought that it would be appropriate to use the model of other committees that the government chaired. The argument was made that it would be more appropriate for the opposition to chair, and I think that point is absolutely essential to ensure that folks have confidence in the review that is going to take place. However, to go one step further, what is good about the model being proposed is that we would have two opposition parties, one in favour of the act and one opposed to the act, but we would not have a situation in which one of the parties was obviously a cheerleader for what happened and I think would not have impartiality.

On the second question of how quickly we need to act, as I said at the beginning of my speech, these powers are extraordinary and these circumstances were extraordinary, so it is essential that folks have answers as to the appropriateness of the powers and their use, and also that we have separate processes that we are going to have to have a conversation around in BOIE and elsewhere to make sure that this sort of thing never happens again.

On the third question, which was on whether it was appropriate for MPs to take part in the protests outside, I hope that members reflect on the lawlessness that we saw out there. As much as we may agree with some of the points that were being made, what was being fomented and what it was all about was absolutely inappropriate to be taking place.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the circumstances of the Emergencies Act have certainly been one of the more significant debates in which I have participated in this place. I welcomed the Emergencies Act, and one of the reasons I felt comfortable voting yes for it was that the parliamentary oversight process was rigorous, in the sense that there will be a committee and there will also be an inquiry.

I would put forward this notion to the hon. government House leader. One of the worst things that has happened to Canadian democracy has been the emergence of people believing in “alternative facts”, as the Trump White House used to say. If we think that one set of people in this place have already made up their minds so firmly that they cannot be reliable in investigating, I think that is a wrong supposition. Obviously Conservatives are part of the committee, but I would make the point that the hon. member for Kitchener Centre and I are also an opposition party in this place. We respect each other a lot, but we did not vote the same way, and I respect my colleagues across the way who did not vote the same way.

If a committee of all people in this place, including the Green Party, was able to come to a report and give it to Canadians, could we then stop having different sets of facts, really explore what happened, and get past that idea? I get emails from constituents who say that nobody assaulted the workers or the homeless at Shepherds of Good Hope, yet I know it happened. How do we get to an agreed statement of facts if we decide that one set of people in this place are not really open-minded?

• (1240)

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her excellent question.

This is something that I think weighs on all of us in our discourse. We can disagree on many things, but we should not disagree on base facts. There is an obligation that every member has in every debate to hold to the core of explaining what the facts are in any given situation. Unfortunately, with the advent of social media we have seen it become very easy to buy into an alternative reality that is more convenient, and that is a perilous threat to our democracy. Sometimes we think that an email that creates some discomfort for another political party might work for us in a moment, but at the end it is an erosion of the very foundation of this place, and we all must stand firm against it.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am really looking forward to discussing this situation.

Before I begin, I would certainly like to express my concern for the people of Ukraine and the current situation they are going through. All of us are watching very closely. We see the government acting and we are, as Conservatives and as Her Majesty's loyal opposition, in support of many of the government's actions. I note we will be engaged in a take-note debate. Through unanimous consent, we just recently extended the take-note debate to allow more speakers to discuss this current situation.

On Saturday, there was a rally held in Barrie. There were roughly 150 concerned citizens, many of them born in Ukraine. They are Canadians of Ukrainian heritage. They expressed their concern about what was going on, particularly the illegal actions of Vladimir Putin. Yesterday, along with members of the government and the opposition, I attended the rally down at Toronto's Nathan Phillips Square. I do not know how big the crowd was; some estimated it at about 10,000 people. It was quite something. Everyone was united with the brave people of Ukraine. Our thoughts are with them. In the days and weeks ahead, I am sure we will see more significant action on the part of western nations and our allies. I look forward to being able to support those actions.

The sad reality is that we are dealing with a government motion today when we should be dealing with and discussing many of the issues that are happening currently in Ukraine.

We are here because we as Conservatives, and I know Canadians, are looking for some sense of trust in government. We are certainly looking for trust. In the invocation of the Emergencies Act, the government took upon itself extraordinary powers to deal with a situation. We can argue about whether those powers were needed or whether the emergency declaration in the province of Ontario or the emergency declaration in the city of Ottawa were sufficient in dealing with the situation, or whether these extraordinary actions the government took were able to deal with the situation.

There was likely a lot of planning that went on before the invocation of the act on that Monday, February 14, so we really need to restore some level of trust in government through this committee. As the government gave itself extraordinary powers, it is incumbent upon us as members of Parliament to provide extraordinary scrutiny of the government, and not just of the decisions that led up to invoking the Emergencies Act but also of the actions the government took, which I think is what was envisioned in the act as it was crafted in 1988 and approved by this body.

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What reasons were there for what the government did? The government House leader spoke about sedition, which is a strong term, and other factors. It is incumbent upon the committee to find out whether the government's actions were justified and whether they met the threshold for declaring an emergency. This is a matter of trust in government. It is important that we as members of the opposition, and all other parties, make sure that we provide that trust to Canadians for the sake of our public institutions.

I was listening intently as the government House leader was speaking earlier, and he talked about the actions of members of Parliament. Frankly, and I say this with all due respect to the government House leader, the government does not get to judge the actions of others as they relate to establishing a parliamentary committee.

• (1245)

All of us in this place have taken an oath to ensure that we act in the best interests of Canadians, and this committee and the establishment of this committee should be no different than that of any other committee. In fact, I would say it is somewhat similar to what we see in other committees, particularly oversight committees, where members of the opposition are actually the chairs, as in the ethics committees, the government operations committees and the public accounts committee. Those are all oversight committees of Parliament. They have been long established. It should stand to reason that there should be a member of Her Majesty's official opposition as a chair of that committee. It is designed to provide extraordinary oversight.

We can argue all we want about the protests. The protests are gone. Conservatives obviously believe in peaceful protests. For several weeks we were asking the protesters to go home because their voices had been heard. What we saw in Ottawa and across the country, whether it was at border crossings or at other demonstrations, even in my own community of Barrie—Innisfil, was a manifestation of years of frustration, anger and anxiety with dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our job as members of Parliament is to listen to our constituents and to Canadians, make sure that we understand their concerns and deal with those concerns. That is not just precluded to those we agree with. It includes people we do not agree with. I get lots of calls and emails in my office, as we all do, of varying opinions, ideologies and political ideals, but that does not mean we discount that. We have to listen to everybody. That is our job.

Listening those who came to Ottawa was important, to hear their voices and their anxiety, to hear the frustration they were feeling. Last week, I was returning phone calls and emails and that same level of anger and frustration, over what we have been dealing with over the last two years, was being relayed to me while I was sitting in my constituency office. There were some people who were upset about the Emergencies Act being invoked. There were other people who were happy about the Emergencies Act being invoked.

All of them felt the same way, that we need to understand what led up to the Emergencies Act invocation, what evidence was used and what decisions the government made in invoking the Emergencies Act. Was it political? Was it to protect the Prime Minister because he had been seen as not acting on this? Was it actually to sup-

press the seditionist forces that the government is speaking about, that the government House leader just mentioned?

We have to get to the bottom of it. The only way that we can do that is to make sure that we have a committee that is reflective of the proportionality of parliamentarians in this place, not casting or judging what each member of Parliament is going to preclude on that committee, but basing our decision and our recommendations to Canadians and our findings to Canadians based on what we are hearing, what evidence is being provided by the government and other institutions, like law enforcement. I do not think that is an unreasonable request.

What led up to the circumstances that have brought us to now dealing with two hours of debate, and I suspect several hours of further debate on another day, when we should be getting down to the work of the committee? As the government House leader said, and as prescribed in the act, there is a requirement for us, once the revocation order is made, to study the issue. That is really where we have tried to go on the formation of the committee, to find some sort of consensus. Then there will be an inquiry within 60 days. What led us to this point where the government has to drop the hammer of presenting a motion to Parliament to determine the establishment and composition of this committee?

• (1250)

In our first discussions with the government House leader, Conservatives actually proposed that the scrutiny of regulations committee look into this action by the government. We felt, at the time, that it was purpose built, and if we look at the mandate of the scrutiny of regulations committee, a lot of what we are working on and intending on finding in relation to the government's action is there. It is actually mandated within the scrutiny of regulations committee.

It is a joint committee of Parliament, with members from the Senate and the House of Commons. It has 16 members on it. It is chaired by a Conservative member of Parliament on the House side and by a senator on the Senate side. I do not think that, at this point, the scrutiny of regulations committee has met to constitute and formulate a chair because of COVID.

We felt that was a reasonable proposal because the government had initially proposed, as the government House leader said, the medical assistance in dying committee, which became an ad hoc committee of Parliament. It had two co-chairs, not three as is currently proposed in this motion. We felt that was going to be a reasonable solution to this, a joint Senate and House committee that is purpose built and purpose driven for what this committee will be charged to do.

We presented that. It was on Thursday before the vote, and then the Monday of the vote, the government House leader came to me and said that he had spoken to the third and fourth opposition parties and they had come up with a solution to the committee. There was no opportunity for me, as opposition House leader, to work or reflect on this. That is what led to this motion being proposed today.

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Members can imagine what I thought when I saw the composition of this committee. I looked and saw three co-chairs. There is not a parliamentary standing committee today that exists, even in the scrutiny of regulations committee, that has three co-chairs on it. This is proposing a co-chair of the third and fourth parties of the opposition, plus one from the Senate side as well. To us, that was a non-starter, despite the fact that the government House leader had already spoken to the other opposition parties about this.

The challenge was that we were not going to agree with this, so we were effectively at a stalemate. What we thought was a reasonable proposal on this committee was rejected by the government, an already existing committee, for this new ad hoc committee. As the government House leader said, he did not trust the opposition parties, members of the opposition, to have good judgment on this committee. I think that is an absolutely ridiculous and absurd assertion.

Failing any further agreement, we find ourselves in the position that we are in today, which is what I believe to be an absolutely absurd proposal of three co-chairs for this committee, one each from the third and fourth parties and a member of the Senate, and providing for two Conservative MPs, neither of whom are to be chairs.

I take members back to my earlier statement when I said the oversight committees of Parliament, those standing committees, are always chaired by an opposition party. There is a reason for that. It is because they are designed to provide oversight. This committee is designed to provide oversight on the government. If the government is convinced that its actions both leading up to the invocation of the Emergencies Act and its actions subsequent to the invocation of the Emergencies Act is justified and defensible, then it should have no problem being held to the account that is required.

The government should have no problem justifying to this committee, whether it is led by an opposition chair or not, and providing that information. The committee should have no problem, without prejudice, doing its work to hold the government to account and restore that trust in government that Canadians expect.

• (1255)

As I mentioned earlier, part of the challenge is understanding how we got here and this manifestation of anger. There are a lot of Canadians right now who are upset. They are upset after two years of lockdowns and two years of restrictions. They see other G7 countries opening up. In fact, just today, the U.S. Congress announced that there would be no more mask mandates. Other countries are limiting their restrictions and eliminating the mandates, yet here in Canada, as provinces are lifting some of those mandates and restrictions, we are still seeing this level of control with regard to the federal government that is causing a lot of anxiety and a lot of confusion among Canadians.

It was just a couple of weeks ago that we proposed, with the support of our Bloc colleagues, for the government to establish a plan by February 28 to move away from the restrictions and mandates so that we can provide Canadians with some sense that we were going to get back to normalcy in the country, yet the Liberals and their coalition partners in the NDP voted against that motion. They voted against the plan, despite the fact that their own chief public health official had talked about living with COVID, that this was going to

be a normal occurrence and that we had to start thinking about living with COVID. That was all we were asking for.

We did it while people were protesting here and in other parts of the country, so think of the message that was sent to Canadians who are desperate to get back to some sense of normalcy, to spend more time with their family in the United States and to not have to worry about some of the mandates and restrictions vis-à-vis flying and other things.

We are at a 90% vaccination rate at this point, which is greater than some of the other G7 countries around the world. They are the ones that are limiting their mandates and reducing them and getting rid of them, yet here we are, still locked down. That anger is being manifested in what we saw with these protests.

Instead of providing Canadians a bit of hope, they just beat them down again and fed into that anger and that anxiety. All we were trying to do was provide a little hope. Give us a plan, an exit strategy or something that we can go back to Canadians with and say that by this date, this will happen and by this date, that will happen.

I know the government's talking point on this is that they follow science and evidence-based decision-making. I would suggest that they do that only when it agrees with their ideology. This is not about science any more. This is about political science. It is about the Prime Minister, his party and the NDP holding on, for some reason, to this complete control over Canadians. It has to stop.

This started a long time ago. This did not just start now. As I said, this manifested itself, this anger and this anxiety, months and months ago, when, in May, the Prime Minister made a statement that he did not believe in mandatory vaccination, that this is not the kind of country we are in and that we do not do that in Canada.

Then, all of a sudden, a day before the election, the Prime Minister stands up and says that we are going to have mandatory vaccination, creating a wedge issue during the election, an election that nobody wanted, that cost \$660 million and was at the height of Afghanistan falling and western Canada burning.

There were lots of things that were happening around the world, but it was the Prime Minister's intention to call an election and use the issue of mandatory vaccinations, despite the fact that at the time there might have been 75% or 80% of Canadians being vaccinated, as a wedge issue to further divide Canadians.

We saw, through the course of the election, the Prime Minister of the country referring to Canadians who were not vaccinated as misogynists and extremists. He asked whether we had to tolerate these people. It is no wonder people became pissed off—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1300)

The Deputy Speaker: I would ask the hon. member to keep to the realm of parliamentary language. I would ask the hon. member to retract that and rethink it.

Mr. John Brassard: I apologize for that, Mr. Speaker. It is no wonder people were angered when the Prime Minister of the country referred to his own countrymen, his people, in those terms because he does not agree with them and they do not agree with him. It is not prime ministerial, and it really has affected a lot of people in more ways than perhaps the Prime Minister thinks.

The challenge right now is that the anxiety and the anger are persisting, and are still manifesting themselves. The situation we find ourselves in is with respect to the level of trust. We are looking into our public institutions and making sure that they are functioning in a way that gives confidence to Canadians and that our democracy is functioning in a way that gives confidence to Canadians, because we have seen over the course of the last six years a pattern of systemic overreach by the government.

I can cite this pattern. Whether it is the banking information of 500,000 Canadians that was being looked into by Stats Canada, the ethics breaches, the WE Charity scandal, the cellphone and mobility-data tracking of millions of Canadians, this pattern has shown itself to be an overreach. This is in addition to the contempt that the Liberals have shown with respect to the Winnipeg lab documents, with the Speaker making a ruling and the government not allowing that information. This is the erosion of confidence that makes it even more important for this committee to provide the confidence that Canadians need in order not just to get to the bottom of the invocation of the act, but also to make sure that the actions of the government were justified and met the threshold of the imposition of this act so that we can provide that for Canadians.

The other thing I would like to address is the other pattern we have seen, particularly in this Parliament. It is inexplicable to me how an opposition party can be in lockstep with the government. I am speaking specifically about the New Democratic Party. It is in lockstep with the government in everything it does. We mentioned during the emergency debate that the foundations of that party were in being the working people's party. To see the New Democrats act in lockstep with the government on everything, even in the support of the invocation of the Emergencies Act, was quite frankly upsetting to many people.

We saw the Prime Minister, last week, imply that a lack of support for the invocation of the act meant that it was going to be a confidence vote. In fact, I stood up just before the vote and I asked the government House leader about that. He said we should just get on with the vote. Convention around this place dictates that the government advise Parliament and the Speaker that a vote is in fact a confidence vote.

However, the Prime Minister and the government not only browbeat the NDP and put its members into fear that we were going to call an election, which we all know the NDP does not want at this point, but the Liberals also browbeat many of their backbenchers, including two of the more vocal backbenchers: the member for Louis-Hébert and the member for Beaches—East York. They said last week that they did not agree with the invocation of the act and it did not meet the threshold that the government had purported, yet they were told that if they did not support it the Prime Minister was going to call an election. Can members imagine the Prime Minister threatening his own backbench and threatening the NDP into supporting the invocation of the act, if they did not support something

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that he wanted and that we do not know was justified, which is the purpose of this committee.

Of course, by coincidence or not, two days later we saw the revocation of the act. All of a sudden, everything was fine in the land, so let us revoke the order. The Prime Minister obviously tried to justify this. As I said at the start, I believe this was done for political reasons, unless I see evidence otherwise, to justify the many criticisms the Prime Minister was receiving as a result of inaction on this.

● (1305)

It was not surprising to me when the NDP supported the Liberals on this and continue to support them, as I suspect, on this motion as well. Why would they not? They would be getting a chair of a committee. Why would they not want to support the government on this? It is extraordinary, because it is not the third or fourth party that gets the chair of a committee. It is the official opposition that gets the chair of an oversight committee, not the third or fourth party. This would be breaking from convention, and this is why we have a problem.

The other thing we proposed, and I know that this has been publicized and the government House leader has spoken about this, is that the way the act was written in 1988 prescribed that members of a recognized party with 12 members or more would form the committee. I brought this up in our initial House leaders meeting. This would mean the Liberals, the Conservatives, the NDP and the Bloc, as well as a recognized party in the Senate, which would mean the Conservative Party. That is what is prescribed in the act and is in the spirit of the act, as well.

After we went back and forth, and this absurd proposal we are dealing with today came to me, it was my position that I would default back to the act. It is not my fault, nor is it the fault of our colleagues or of any of the opposition parties, that the government has not amended the Emergencies Act to reflect the current composition of the Senate. That is the government's problem. It has not done that to this point, and now the Liberals are saying they have to have those senators there, but it is not prescribed in the act.

When we did not agree to this absurd proposal of the committee structure we are dealing with today, we said that we could go back to what the act says. It is not my fault the Prime Minister created the Senate in the manner in which he did, but has not done anything to reflect not just this act, but other acts that would need to be amended. If the government wants to reflect better what the current composition of the Senate is, it can certainly do that.

In fact, over the weekend there was a story in the National Post that suggested the government was working on this, but then it called an election. The Liberals were working on it, but then they called an election. B.C. was burning, and they called an election. Afghanistan was falling, and they called an election. There were lots of consequences to the Prime Minister calling an election 18 months after the last one for his own vanity.

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There are several other points that can be made on this, but the main one I want to make is about establishing this trust in government. A couple of weeks ago, I was sitting in the ethics committee. We had the Ethics Commissioner there, and I asked him about his perception of the level of trust in government. His response was that there had been a significant decline in the level of trust in government not just recently or with recent occurrences, but also over the course of the last six years since the Liberal government had taken over. Certainly in polling we have seen this.

For me, this is a matter of principle. It is not a matter of politics. I am not looking at playing partisan political games. I am not looking at trying to undermine the work of the committee. We have already established committees in Parliament that are purpose-built for this type of scrutiny and oversight. On the Conservative side, I do not think it is unreasonable to ask that we maintain a structure similar to what we have instead of this ad hoc committee that the government is proposing. I think it is not an unreasonable request for us to do that.

I just want to reiterate the threshold of what constitutes a national emergency and why this is important. It is defined in the act as:

an urgent and critical situation of a temporary nature that

(a) seriously endangers the lives, health or safety of Canadians and is of such proportions or nature as to exceed the capacity or authority of a province to deal with it, or

(b) seriously threatens the ability of the Government of Canada to preserve the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of Canada, and that cannot be effectively dealt with under any other law of Canada.

• (1310)

There is a strong argument to be made. I know that many people have weighed in on this. We had a fulsome weekend of debate about whether that threshold was in fact met. This is what the committee is going to be charged with. Was it for a political reason that the government invoked this act, to deal with the criticism of the Prime Minister when all of the other emergency powers were already in place, both provincially and municipally? What has been prescribed in legislation were incredible powers given to ministers of the Crown to deal with these types of situations. We saw situations in Emerson, Manitoba, and at the Ambassador Bridge. In Coutts, Alberta, police defused the situation. It was the same with Emerson and the Ambassador Bridge. Could those powers, which had already been enacted and given through regulatory and legislative authority to the ministers of the Crown, have been sufficient without pulling this nuclear option of the Emergencies Act?

That is what this committee is going to be charged with. We have to make sure the oversight and scrutiny that this committee will provide, and the subsequent inquiry that will follow, do exactly that. This is a matter of trust, and it is up to the government to defend its actions. It is up to the government to justify its actions.

It is up to opposition members, all of us in this place, to use the powers that we are given to provide this extraordinary scrutiny and oversight on the government so that Canadians can have confidence in their ability to understand what just happened, what happened during the crisis, and whether the government in fact did overreach or extend beyond what it needed to during the crisis. There is no doubt that the people of Ottawa dealt with a lot. There is no question about it, but we have to make sure that the spirit the Emergen-

cies Act intended, and the thresholds the Emergencies Act calls for, were met. It is up to the government to justify that.

In conclusion, I will move the following amendment. I move, seconded by the member for Kelowna—Lake Country:

That the motion be amended:

(a) in paragraph (b), by replacing the words “with three Chairs of which the two House Co-Chairs shall be from the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party and the Senate Co-Chair shall be determined by the Senate;” with the words “with two Chairs of which one House Co-Chair shall be from the Liberal Party and the Senate Co-Chair shall be from the Conservative Party”;

(b) in paragraph (1)(iii), by adding, after the words “election of the”, the words “Co-Chairs and”.

• (1315)

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member's constituents in Barrie for selecting an extremely good candidate in the upcoming provincial election. The mayor of Barrie, Jeff Lehman, is going to run as a Liberal candidate in the election this spring and I look forward to him representing Barrie at Queen's Park. I congratulate the people of Barrie.

I heard the Conservative House leader talk about the fact that the government House leader said that he does not trust parliamentarians to do this work, but that is not what I heard. I heard him say that it was important to remove the two parties from the chairmanship that had the most at stake in terms of what went on in the House during the debate over the course of the four or five days. I think it is a good plan if the chairs are from other parties, because it would remove what we saw there.

Why does it matter so much to have a chair? Why is it so important that the Conservatives have a chair? What do Conservatives think that will affect in the outcome?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's point. As I said in the course of my speech, there is no other situation or committee that is structured in the manner the government is proposing, where there are three co-chairs and members of the third and fourth party. Typically, as I said, oversight committees are designed to provide oversight and justification of the government's actions. We have three committees right now relating to ethics, government operations and public accounts that have Conservative members as the chair.

The government's opportunity in this committee is to provide justification for its actions. The committee's job is to provide oversight. In my opinion and in the opinion of our side, it should be consistent with what we see in other committees of the House.

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Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for my colleague, but I come back to the issue that was much discussed last weekend and continues to be discussed today, that is, the impact of the occupation on the people of Ottawa. Hundreds of businesses were closed and thousands of people were thrown out of work and had no means to put food on the table or keep a roof over their heads. There were assaults. There was vandalism. The people of Ottawa, particularly people with disabilities and seniors, were cut off from essential services.

There was unbelievable hardship, yet throughout this, I never saw a Conservative MP express any sympathy at all for the people of Ottawa. I never heard a Conservative MP stand up and say that it was simply wrong what the people of Ottawa were living through. When we talk about the loss of jobs in Windsor and other parts of country and the four charges of conspiracy to commit murder in Coutts, Alberta, I do not get the sense that Conservative MPs understood the impacts of the occupation.

Could the member please explain to us why Conservative MPs never expressed concern for all of the immense hardship caused by this occupation?

• (1320)

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for my colleague. I have been working with him now for the better part of three weeks as the opposition House leader, and I respect what he does in that capacity. However, to characterize this in such a way that somehow we were not, as Conservatives, empathetic to the situation is a gross misstatement. Two or three weeks before action was taken by the police, our opposition leader said that the voices of protesters had been heard, that we were listening to them and that it was time for them to go home. That is precisely what she said.

I will question the member too. When we had an opposition day motion that called on the government to create a plan and an exit strategy, why would he and his party vote against that given the anxiety, fear and the anguish of people who lost their jobs during the mental health crisis in this country? Why would he not have supported that as part of the strategy to exit this pandemic like other G7 countries are doing?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I hope that we will be able to get past all the partisanship and get the committee under way.

There is something that my colleague did not address but that I believe is important. I saw a certain complacency toward the protesters among some Conservative members, in particular my colleague from Carleton. I would like to know whether my colleague thinks that this complacency should be looked into by the committee.

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, it is the government's actions that should be held to account here. It is the government that decided to invoke the Emergencies Act. We need to find out what thresholds were met. We also need to understand, as I said, that there is a strong level of anger and anxiety that exists and that it has mani-

festated across this country because of what people have been dealing with over the last two years. What we saw in Ottawa is the same thing we are seeing in Barrie—Innisfil and in other parts of the country.

We need to look at not only the manifestation of what has gone on, but also the government's actions. It is the one that invoked the Emergencies Act. The government is the one that has to justify it and be accountable for this. That is where the focus should be, in my opinion.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the government House leader and his suggestion about the use of the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations. I sat on that committee when Chris Charlton, an NDP member, and former senator Bob Runciman were the co-chairs. It worked really well under the independent counsel of Peter Bernhardt.

We learned at that committee the definition of SOR, or statutory orders and regulations. In those regulations that are referred to the committee, we see questions: Does the government have the authority to invoke those regulations or orders? Does the government follow the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, among others? Does it execute and not over-exercise its power?

In the emergencies order, I believe the government did not meet the threshold. Having a committee like the scrutiny of regulations committee would be an excellent suggestion. Why does the member believe the government has rejected that suggestion?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question. I made that point during my speech.

I believe that the scrutiny of regulations committee is purpose built for many of the reasons the hon. member stated and many more within its mandate. It could have been constituted easily because it is already an existing committee of Parliament. There might have been some moving parts and pieces in terms of members. However, it could have been up to us or the government side to determine that.

Why does the government not want the scrutiny of regulations committee? I think it is because it does not fit the narrative. It wants to vilify Conservatives as somehow being mean-spirited, and it wants to demonize us for our actions of simply listening to our constituents and listening to Canadians. It does not fit the government's narrative.

Developing and creating a committee that undermines the purpose of this committee is, quite frankly, the purpose of what the government is proposing.

• (1325)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, very quickly, the Prime Minister and the government recognized, right from the outset of the proclamation for the Emergencies Act, that accountability and transparency were important. That is why the Prime Minister made reference to the committee we are talking about and the inquiry that follows.

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Would the member not recognize that all of us have a responsibility to be held, to a certain degree, to task? We are recognizing that what we are trying to do here is say that we have two opposition parties, one opposed and one in favour. The objection is no to the government and no to the official opposition, primarily because of other actions that I do not have the time to expand on at this point.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, let me start by saying that the Prime Minister did not even have the courtesy of introducing the Emergencies Act within our symbol of democracy, which again shows contempt for our institutions. We have seen this pattern of contempt continue throughout the six and a half years of the government.

The other thing I would say is that what we are proposing in our amendment, to have a Liberal member from the House and a Conservative member from the Senate, is a reasonable proposal. It is just as reasonable as our scrutiny of regulations proposal was at the beginning of these discussions, which leads us to the hammer being dropped today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by saying that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the hon. member for La Prairie.

Today, we are being asked to speak to a motion aimed at creating a joint parliamentary review committee of the House of Commons and the Senate to meet our obligations under subsection 62(1) of the Emergencies Act. There appears to be a consensus on the need for such a committee, and the broad terms of its composition and mandate are defined in the act. Under the circumstances, I am tempted to say that the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of the motion and to thank the government for its good intentions.

However, I understand that my colleagues in the other parties intend to debate the issue in order to justify their vision of who should be appointed to the committee and who should or should not serve as chair and vice-chair. To be frank, as long as the proportion of members of each party in the House is reflected in the composition of the committee, this is not really an issue for the Bloc Québécois.

I will say, however, that the Bloc Québécois is extremely interested in how the committee will carry out its mandate, and that we believe that this exercise is crucial.

We live in a world that is constantly and rapidly changing. These last few years, the news has kept us tense, concerned and worried about the way our leaders were responding. Whether we are talking about the pandemic or, more recently, the war that just started in Ukraine, governments in every country have had to react and offer the people they govern a reasonable and effective position and response in line with their values and interests.

Unfortunately, one crisis often led to another, to which governments also had to respond. Some governments are criticized for being too soft, others for being intransigent, and still others for their lack of boldness and imagination. Although most of this criticism is constructive, it can get aggressive at times and can even degenerate

into social disruption, which then leads to its own crisis that also requires a response.

One thing is certain. The modern era has its share of unusual challenges that will force us to find unusual solutions. This means going off the beaten path, but each step will require vigilance and prudence.

For the purposes of this debate, although it is obviously a concern, let us set aside the war in Ukraine for a moment and focus on the mandate of the committee we are creating. We must look at the protests that some people justified by saying they were the direct result of the measures taken by the authorities in response to the health crisis facing the entire world, namely the COVID-19 pandemic.

The crisis caused by the pandemic forced the authorities to impose health measures with which not everyone complied. That is obviously normal. Some people wanted to express their disagreement in our streets, in front of public buildings, and that is also obviously normal. It is a legitimate exercise of the rights and freedoms recognized by all our governments, in both Quebec and the rest of Canada.

Unfortunately, some people took advantage of the situation to organize unacceptable and sometimes even dangerous protests that had to be contained. That is when the federal government decided to invoke the Emergencies Act in response to the protests caused by the health measures, which had themselves been adopted in response to the pandemic.

Was it necessary, appropriate or useful? That is what we have to decide. This soul-searching is unavoidable and essential, because we cannot forget that the Emergencies Act is the heavy artillery of the federal government's legislative arsenal. This is the act that would give us the power to implement the measures needed to respond to an international crisis or a state of war. Think about it.

● (1330)

The global COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine were not enough of a concern for our government to invoke the Emergencies Act, but the protests in recent weeks were.

The committee should therefore review the exercise of powers pursuant to the proclamation of emergency measures on February 14, which was confirmed by the House on the evening of Monday, February 21, before being revoked less than 48 hours later on Wednesday, February 23.

What happened to this major proclamation? How did we use the tools it provided us? Did we abuse those tools? Did we leave any of them unused?

What can we say today about the results it delivered? Was the proclamation useful or not? Is it possible that it was actually detrimental to the interests of the government and its citizens?

This is a rare and extremely important mandate, as rare and important as a proclamation of emergency measures should be. We must therefore conduct a thorough and exhaustive analysis.

We owe it to our fellow Quebeckers and Canadians. We owe it to future generations, since, even though we hope it will not happen, there will very probably be other crises that could give rise to such a declaration in the near or distant future, such as disasters, states of emergency, international crises, even war. Future leaders will undoubtedly look to past precedents. What conclusions will they draw? What will we inspire them to do?

That is for us to decide today. It goes without saying that the committee will have to work with all due seriousness and diligence. The Bloc Québécois hopes that the work will begin immediately and that all of the resources needed for the committee to carry out its important mission will be made available without delay.

It will have to hear from witnesses. Will it face obstructions like the ones we experienced last year?

The committee will also need access to all of the relevant documents, legal opinions, and minutes of cabinet discussions and meetings. Will government officials co-operate?

These questions are of more concern to me than who sits on the committee. I am eager to hear the answers. With all due respect, dear colleagues, I encourage us to work effectively and collaboratively.

Now, let us get to work.

• (1335)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member fully when he says “let’s get to work”. This is something we very much want to see happen. It is within the legislation that this standing committee is required. How much weight, for example, will the standing committee give to the RCMP commissioner, who talked about the benefits of having this tool, or the interim Ottawa chief of police, who used this tool virtually immediately from the moment in which it was proclaimed, or very close to that?

It is important that once the committee gets together, it assigns the appropriate amount of weight so that as legislators we can look at ways in which we can improve upon the system. I am wondering if the member could provide his thoughts. This process should enable us to improve the system going forward. Would he not agree?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his question, and I share his concern.

I too am confident that the committee will give due weight to each position. It will study documents and hear witnesses. The value of one person’s testimony should not be tainted by the value of another person’s testimony. We can get the job done. However, it has to start now.

I understand my colleague’s concern. Although I know that it is not up to him to answer my questions, I am tempted to ask whether

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he can commit on behalf of his government to co-operate with the committee, since that is my concern. Will the committee get the documents? Will it have access to the Prime Minister and the ministers responsible when it wants to question them?

That is our main concern. However, I fully agree with my hon. colleague that due weight must be given to every person involved.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague from the Bloc Québécois. We need to create this committee soon.

[*English*]

I know there has been an issue of public and private information that becomes available to the committee, and how much should be public and how much should be private.

I know the member has expertise in this field. I am interested to know, as we move forward, what sort of criteria he would be looking for on public information to made public and private information to be made private. I think it is a fair question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his excellent question. I think that the committee’s mandate is exceptional, as I mentioned in my opening speech, since I do not think we have had the occasion to study the use of the Emergencies Act very often in the House.

Since world events have been pressing upon us week after week in the past two years, I am convinced that future members of the House will look back in a few years on what we did. We need to send them the right message. Yes, we will need all the information, because the committee’s report will probably be studied for many years to come.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is consensus among three of the four parties recognized in the House, as well as among most groups in the Senate. It seems to me that we could have adopted this motion by unanimous consent today and started work tomorrow.

However, one party is refusing to consent. I would like to know whether my colleague finds it unfortunate that we have to wait several days, rather than start tomorrow morning by consensus of the majority of the parties in the House and Senate.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question. I, too, would like to get started on this right away because, as I said from the start, I think that this is an important mandate that must be carried out diligently and responsibly. I would have liked for this motion to be adopted unanimously and for the committee to start its work tomorrow morning.

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However, since we do not always get what we want in life, I will settle for hoping that this is done with diligence, that we resolve this issue and that the committee is able to start its work this week. We must not take forever to decide on the composition of the committee. My colleague is right; we need to get to work as soon as possible.

• (1340)

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are talking here about the creation of a joint committee, which is important because it is the next logical step to the Emergencies Act, an exceptional measure. I am using the Prime Minister's words to make sure that people are not saying that the member for La Prairie is exaggerating again.

When the Prime Minister said that he was invoking the act, he said that it was the ultimate tool and the last resort, so much so that this law's predecessor, the War Measures Act, was used only three times in Canadian history. The Emergencies Act has not been used since it was created in 1988. It needs to remain an exceptional measure.

I welcome the creation of the joint committee to examine what was done before the act was invoked. We need to conduct a review and find out what happened beforehand in order to determine whether the use of this ultimate tool was justified. Obviously, we are in favour of this exercise. It is mandatory, but we still want to say that we think it is an excellent idea.

If the committee is to look back at what happened, it must absolutely examine the crisis as a whole and explore what questions need to be asked as a result of those events. The first point I want to make is that even before the truckers arrived in Ottawa, they made it clear that they planned to protest in front of Parliament. Some of them left Vancouver in their 53-foot-long trucks, and they did not get here over night. Let us just say that if they were clean shaven when they left, they looked more like ZZ Top when they arrived. I do not know how many days it took, and yet people here were surprised and wondered what they were going to do.

Why did it take so long to figure out how to let them protest here but without actually taking over and occupying the city? There had to be a way. Quebec City managed to do it, and it could very well have been done here, too.

During the first two weeks, we hardly saw the government, and the Prime Minister was pretty much absent. First he added fuel to the fire, but then said it was up to the police to resolve the matter. It will be important to paint an accurate picture of the government's actions. Was the government's inaction as bad as it seemed? Some questions need to be asked.

People can be like ducks. They can appear calm and still on the surface while paddling like mad under the water. Was that the case here? Was the government paddling like mad or did it do nothing? It is important to look at what actually happened.

Did the government use every tool at its disposal before using this last resort? Did it reach out to the various police forces? Did it offer any assistance? When the chief of the Ottawa Police Service said he needed help from the federal government, was that request acted upon? What was done?

If the committee is to do a decent job, it must answer those questions and look at what measures were actually taken. I could go on and on because we have so many questions.

The Emergencies Act was invoked on February 14, but the government did nothing with it until five days later. I wonder why. When it finally took action, did it use the legal tools available? Could authorities have done what they did on that weekend without using the Emergencies Act? In other words, was it necessary? We do not know and we wonder.

The following Monday, after the people left, we arrived here and were told that it was awful, and that we absolutely needed to continue using the legislation. The Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois wondered, and rightly so, what we were fighting against, and who we were intervening against with this legislation. There was no one left outside.

They tried hard to convince us. They twisted themselves into a knot. At one point they said that the situation is unacceptable and we absolutely must keep enforcing this legislation. The Liberals and the NDP wanted everyone to know that this was essential.

• (1345)

However, on the Wednesday, 42 hours later, the government announced that it no longer needed to invoke the act after all. It was like a balloon at a porcupine party; 42 hours later, the whole thing was suddenly over and the act was no longer needed.

That makes no sense. Can we find out what happened? On Monday evening, the government was saying that it absolutely had to intervene, even though we could not see why. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, since you were there, playing close attention and thinking the speeches were good. You were probably a bit surprised when the government, which was pushing to still invoke the act on Monday evening, decided it was no longer necessary by Wednesday.

For these reasons, it is extremely important to have a special joint committee to figure out what, exactly, happened, whether the invocation was worthwhile and, if this situation were to happen again, how the government could be more effective.

The Bloc Québécois's approach was simple. We wanted it to happen fast, we wanted to come to an agreement quickly and we wanted a neutral chair. Because all of the parties' positions were clear, we wanted a neutral chair that reflected the views both in favour and against.

This, therefore, made a single chair impossible, unless that person had a personality disorder. We then needed two co-chairs, one person in favour and one against, or two in favour and two against. That is what the Bloc Québécois was calling for. Above all, the Bloc Québécois was looking for a consensus.

Earlier, my colleague from the NDP said that his party's position was shared by two of the three other recognized parties in the House. I disagree. The Bloc Québécois was against it. Based on what my colleague, the official opposition house leader, said, he would not be okay with it either. I am not great at math, but one plus one equals two. There was more than one party against it. The Bloc Québécois was also against it because we wanted a consensus, but for that to happen, the chair would have to be neutral.

The Liberal motion proposes that the co-chairs be one NDP member, thus in favour, one Bloc member, thus against, and one independent senator, a Liberal, and thus in favour. If I have calculated correctly that makes two co-chairs in favour and one against. That is not impartial, and it is not what we are looking for. The Conservatives' amendment proposes that there be two co-chairs consisting of a Conservative senator, thus against, and a Liberal MP, thus in favour. We like that better.

We have seen the parties argue about who will serve as co-chairs. I can say that the Bloc Québécois has always sought consensus, and I am convinced that all leaders of the other parties will agree on that. That was and continues to be our position.

We must get to work quickly, and do so in the most intelligent way possible. There was a crisis and the government used a tool that we believe was disproportionate. We are asking to be convinced. It may be that behind closed doors the government will pull a rabbit out of a hat, which will convince us that its decision was not that crazy. It is possible, and that is all we want to find out.

That is why we are here. The Bloc Québécois will fully co-operate in order to get to the bottom of what happened and to ensure that this act will never be used again unless it is truly warranted.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing we can recognize in the government resolution is that the Bloc was in opposition to the Emergencies Act being implemented as an opposition party. The NDP, on the other hand, was in favour of the Emergencies Act. We have two co-chairs, one in favour and one opposed, who are in a far better and greater position to be independent in taking on their role of chair.

Does the Bloc party not see the value in having two opposition parties? I do not believe Bloc members were promoting and congratulating the protests out front.

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

He is right in saying that the Bloc Québécois and the NDP represent one in favour and one opposed. The problem is that there is one presumably independent senator. We generally know where "independent" senators stand or which side they are on. It is like the leaning tower of Pisa, as Maurice Duplessis said.

Two essential conditions must be met. First, the condition of impartiality is not being met. Second, there must be a consensus.

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The Bloc Québécois agrees, but we would have liked all of the parties to be in agreement so that we could reach a consensus. That is all.

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing that has come to light throughout the course of this whole thing is how important it is for the government to be held to account for its actions in invoking the Emergencies Act. However, the government and the NDP seem to be holding some opposition parties to a greater account.

To the hon. member from the Bloc, how important is it for us to hold the government to account on this?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague and thank him for the question.

Once again, we need to emphasize how important impartiality is. In that regard, I want to point out that, in the beginning, the Conservatives wanted a Conservative chair, just to follow up on the thoughts and comments my colleague just shared with us.

When I spoke with the leader of the official opposition, he expressed interest in having an impartial chair, so I can only applaud his openness and willingness to compromise.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for his speech.

I in turn will ask him a question about the importance of reaching a consensus. It is all well and good for my colleague to work on reaching a consensus, and that is also what the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and I are trying to do, but there is no consensus. That is where things stand.

I find that sad. Instead of obtaining the unanimous consent of the Bloc Québécois, the government and the NDP today on a motion that will let the committee get to work tomorrow, we will have to debate it for several days.

Does he too find that sad?

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I obviously find that to be sad. However, when four parties are involved, the agreement of two or three of them does not constitute a consensus. To reach a consensus, all four parties must agree.

We have discussed this at length, and I worked to reach a consensus. Unfortunately, we were not able to do so because of the rigid position of some people in this place. What can I do?

I cannot reinvent the wheel. I have to say that there is no consensus. I would have liked to reach a consensus, but we do not have one. The Bloc Québécois cannot perform miracles.

Statements by Members

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I unfortunately have only five minutes. Like my other colleagues who have risen in the House today, I want to say that our thoughts are with the Ukrainian people. As we all know very well, the bombing has resumed, and it is getting more intense.

In the name of all parliamentarians in the Parliament of Canada and the democratic life we have in Canada, I want to say that our thoughts are with the parents taking to underground shelters to protect their children from missiles, air strikes and artillery fire.

Our thoughts are of course with the citizens and soldiers confronting the Russian tanks bearing down on them. They are demonstrating great courage and making huge sacrifices to preserve their democracy.

• (1355)

[English]

I'll start today like so many other colleagues have. I know I speak for all members of Parliament here when I say that our thoughts are profoundly with the people of Ukraine, where currently parents are protecting their children in underground fallout shelters and bomb shelters as the bombs have started up again. It is even more serious than what we saw yesterday. Our thoughts are with the civilians and soldiers who are standing up to Russian tanks as we speak. These are citizens standing up in defence of their democracy, and it is something all of us feel profoundly. Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Ukraine at this very moment.

Since I only have a few minutes, I would like to address the motion that is before the House. This motion is to put in place an oversight committee to ensure that we get an appropriate parliamentary review of the Emergencies Act. I know that all member of Parliament believe this is fundamentally important. I think there have been a lot of discussions over the past week and a half, and the motion that has been introduced is something we support.

We believe profoundly that we need to get to the bottom of this and need to get answers for the people of Ottawa, Windsor and other communities that saw their jobs taken away in a moment by the blockades and the occupation. We know the people of Ottawa suffered egregiously during the occupation. Seniors and people with disabilities were unable to get essential services. We know that a wide variety of families were subjected to harm to their hearing because of the loud noise of the industrial horns going 24 hours a day, and to harm because of toxic diesel fumes. As members know, for three weeks Ottawa was the most polluted city in the entire country. That comes with health risks that will continue to be felt for months if not years to come. There was vandalism, assaults and general lawlessness. All of us who were here over that three-week period, particularly on weekends, saw first-hand that there was simply no longer rule of law in this community. All of those things need to be responded to by this oversight committee.

What the government is putting forward is something that has been discussed and negotiated. As I mentioned earlier, three parties of the House of Commons agreed to it and one party refused, which is their right. However, with unanimous consent, we could have been moving forward tomorrow morning with this oversight committee, and I regret that there is no consensus to do that.

We also have a fair provision for our parties. The Conservative Party would have the strongest representation. When we consider both the Senate side and the House of Commons side, the Conservative Party would be represented more than any other party on this committee. The government party would have significant representation, but the Bloc, the NDP, the Progressive Senate Group and the Independent Senators Group would all be represented as well. There was a serious attempt to have good representation from all parties and a serious attempt to have co-chairs who represent both sides of the debate around the Emergencies Act.

I believe the government and the opposition parties that are in agreement with this principle want to move ahead quickly. We could have moved ahead tomorrow morning if we had seen agreement from the fourth party in the House of Commons. We would have been able to move ahead immediately. I suggest to all members that we need to move rapidly on oversight, and we need to move rapidly to put in place this parliamentary review committee.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

HINDU RELIGIOUS SYMBOL

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of over one million Canadians of several religious faiths and, in particular, Hindu Canadians, and as being a Hindu Canadian myself, I call up members of the House and all Canadians to distinguish between the Hindu religious sacred symbol swastika and the Nazi symbol of hatred called *hakenkreuz* in German or “the hooked cross” in English.

In the ancient Indian language of Sanskrit, swastika means “that which brings good luck and well-being”. This ancient and greatly auspicious symbol of the Hindu religion continues to be used today at our Hindu temples, in our religious and cultural rituals, at the entrances to our homes and in our daily lives. Please stop calling the Nazi symbol of hatred a swastika.

We support the ban of the Nazi symbol of hatred, the *hakenkreuz* or the hooked cross, but calling it a swastika is to deny us, Hindu Canadians, our religious right and freedom to use our sacred symbol swastika in our daily lives.

* * *

RARE DISEASE DAY

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in recognition of Rare Disease Day.

The theme of this year's Rare Disease Day is “Share Your Colours”. I offer this limerick in honour of this special day:

Millions in Canada, two-thirds of them youth
Battle rare disease daily, a sad, sombre truth

These diseases touch families and count several thousand
From MS through Alport and von Recklinghausen

They are tough on their children but also their parents
For those stricken with grief, I understand as I share it

My three oldest children battle ills of this kind
And the youngest I lost is always on my mind

We here in this chamber have a big role we share
Supporting access to treatments and affordable care

So whether team blue, red, green, orange or grey
Please join me in celebrating this Rare Disease Day

* * *

UKRAINE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, people across Canada are in solidarity in showing and demonstrating support for the people of Ukraine. What we are seeing in Ukraine today is horrific, but Canadians are responding. They are showing up at rallies and demonstrations. In my own home city of Winnipeg, thousands of people came out in solidarity for Ukraine. They are sending money. They are sending prayers.

The Government of Canada is providing lethal weapons and humanitarian aid. Canadians are coming together because of their concern and love for Ukraine.

Today I am calling for the House to unanimously support the efforts of all Canadians to be there for Ukraine in solidarity as one.

Long live Ukraine.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GISÈLE POMERLEAU

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to pay one last tribute to Gisèle Pomerleau, an exceptional woman who passed away at the age of 81.

Ms. Pomerleau founded the Centre des femmes de Montréal-Est—Pointe-aux-Trembles in 1995 and stood up for women's rights her entire life. Her mission was to help women recognize their potential, and she believed in it so much that she single-handedly ran her organization, using her personal savings at the beginning and then fundraising to the last penny. Newspapers, plays, conferences, round tables, she used any means she could to promote women's rights. Gisèle Pomerleau was also known as a seniors' advocate.

This pioneer's name will definitely not be forgotten. Gisèle Pomerleau made her mark on the development of La Pointe-de-l'Île, and now a social housing project will soon bear her name.

We thank Gisèle Pomerleau, and we will be there to ensure that her mission is carried out.

Statements by Members

[*English*]

C.D. FARQUHARSON COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Today, I am pleased to rise and recognize the C.D. Farquharson Community Association on their joyous 50th anniversary.

It all began when a few residents decided to tackle such local issues as area development, education and community infrastructure. In April 1972, the association's first president, Maurice Liberty, wrote to all residents, urging them to get involved. Named after Scarborough's former medical officer of health, Dr. C.D. Farquharson, the association began with 600 households and is now 1,400 strong.

Over the decades, hundreds of dedicated volunteers have worked tirelessly on projects like the creation of a neighbourhood watch team and block parent program.

[*Translation*]

Congratulations to the current president, Gary Loughlin, and all the past and present members of the association for achieving this incredible milestone. I congratulate them for having built, shaped and supported what is now one of the most dynamic and diverse communities in Toronto.

I wish them a happy 50th anniversary.

* * *

● (1405)

[*English*]

UKRAINE

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to stand with Ukraine and its people for the principles of peace and democracy and to condemn the invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

For the people of Ukraine facing war and for the millions of Canadians of Ukrainian heritage who see their historical lands under attack, Canada's official opposition will continue, as we have been proud to do, to do everything we can to ensure that Canada steps up and does its part.

Vladimir Putin's aggression is an alarming wake-up call to Canada and the free and democratic world, and likewise threatens the safety and security of every Canadian and of democracy itself. Policy needs to reflect the geopolitical reality of our world. From doing our part to ensure that western dollars do not pay for oil and gas that funds Russian aggression to ensuring that there is a strong NATO that stands up for what is right, the defence of democracy in Ukraine is the defence of democracy in Canada and around the world.

Slava Ukraini.

*Statements by Members***BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, “February and Forever: Celebrating Black History today and every day” is the theme for Black History Month this year. I am proud to highlight two important initiatives from my riding that will be embedded in Canadian history this year and beyond.

First, I want to highlight the work of Kwame Delfish, the artist who designed the 2022 Underground Railroad coin for the Royal Canadian Mint to capture the painful history and journey of people of African descent searching for freedom in Canada.

Second, the Scarborough charter brings together over 52 post-secondary institutions to address anti-Black racism and to promote inclusion and equality in higher education. At its core are its guiding principles: Black flourishing, inclusive excellence, mutuality and accountability.

I want to acknowledge the leadership of Principal Wisdom Tettey and his colleagues at the University of Toronto Scarborough campus.

Happy Black History Month.

* * *

HEART MONTH

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, February is Heart Month. We recognize the importance of heart health and taking action against heart disease, a serious and growing problem and leading cause of death in Canada.

For women, heart disease is the number one cause of premature death and 20% more women die of heart failure than men. However, women's cardiovascular health is under-researched and women often do not know the signs.

The good news is that heart disease is preventable. Beating heart disease means focusing on women's heart health and prevention. It means implementing initiatives like mandatory front-of-package nutrition labelling to help inform busy shoppers, a tax on vaping products and restricting flavours in vape products, which are being used by youth at alarming rates.

I would also like to acknowledge the Heart and Stroke Young Leaders, a group of professionals in their twenties and thirties, like Oakville North—Burlington's Charmain Tulloch, who are encouraging young people to adopt a healthy lifestyle and prevent heart disease.

* * *

UKRAINE

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Putin regime's unprovoked and unjust invasion of Ukraine has shocked millions of Canadians, including thousands in my riding who are of Ukrainian descent. Canadians now understand that the threat from Russia is no longer theoretical. They are resolute in their support for Ukraine and want Canada to do all we can to stop the Russian aggression and restore Ukraine's territorial integrity.

Canada, together with our allies, must respond with immediate and long-term actions. Canada must immediately expel the Russian ambassador to our country, and recall our ambassador from Moscow. The Canadian government must act immediately to support and expand our energy sector so that the free world can have a reliable source of ethical and environmentally produced energy. Finally, the government must also take seriously our Arctic sovereignty and military preparedness.

I call on the government to make these and other actions, which support Ukraine and our NATO partners, a priority.

* * *

● (1410)

[*Translation*]

EASING OF MEASURES AT THE BORDER

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, effective today, we are easing our measures at the border and preparing to once again welcome tourists in large numbers. I am proud of our tourism sector and we look forward to a strong and swift recovery.

[*English*]

As of today, the travel advisory is no longer in effect. Speaking as somebody working closely with our tourism industry, I can only rejoice, rejoice that we have collectively made it to this stage in the pandemic where the easing of our border measures was possible to do safely.

The tourism industry brought in \$100 billion to our GDP before the pandemic, and I, for one, want it back.

To all of our hard-working hotel and restaurant workers, to all the small businesses that rely on tourism and to our fantastic tourism operators and travel agents, I say, yes, go get them. To all the hard-working Canadians who just need a beach and a break and want to travel, I say, yes, let us do this.

* * *

UKRAINE

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I, like many Canadians, am a proud descendant of Ukrainian immigrants. Seeing the solidarity of Canadians with Ukraine has reminded me that this conflict is not just personal for Canadians with direct ties to Ukraine.

This conflict is personal to parents who are seeing families separated by conflict. Seeing parents fleeing with their children and sending them to safety before returning to fight has deeply affected me and so many. This conflict is personal to anyone who believes in the spirit of democracy in the face of autocrats. This conflict is personal for anyone who believes in the spirit of democracy. This conflict is personal for anyone who has seen or remembers the horror of armed conflict.

I think just about every Canadian citizen has good reason to see the invasion as a personal attack, not just on the people of Ukraine but on all of us, and we must respond accordingly. Our response to this unprovoked and despicable aggression must be strong and swift. We must continue to put pressure on Putin until the complete withdrawal of Russian forces from the sovereign nation of Ukraine.

Slava Ukraini.

* * *

[*Translation*]

UKRAINE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, whether in Lac-Mégantic, Thetford Mines, Plessisville or even here in Ottawa, our world has changed over the past few days. The word “freedom” has been given a whole new meaning. Unfortunately, the unthinkable has happened: Evil has awakened and revealed its true nature.

Today, whether in Kyiv, Kharkiv or Odessa, peace has turned into war and happiness has turned into fear. People do not know what will happen or if they even have a future. Today, from Moscow to St. Petersburg, fathers and mothers are finding out that their sons, their friends and their neighbours have taken up arms against their Ukrainian cousins. From Canada to Poland to France, solidarity has also awakened. It has awakened to the horror of a vicious attack that was both unjustified and unprovoked and that served to satisfy the desires of a power-hungry leader looking to build his legacy.

In the meantime, thousands of people are being killed. We cannot remain silent. We cannot stand idly by. We must take action. I invite all parliamentarians from all democracies from every country to unite against Putin the dictator, to unite for the Ukrainian people and, most of all, to unite for peace.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion announced the construction of 1,458 social and affordable housing units under the second Canada-Quebec rapid housing initiative agreement.

I am pleased that one of the initiative's 79 projects will be carried out in my riding of Alfred-Pellan. A total of \$11.39 million has been allocated to Laval's municipal housing bureau for Habitation Bousquet, which will help build 24 new housing units for vulnerable or low-income individuals.

Our government continues to help cities meet their housing needs and give the people of Quebec and of Laval, in particular, the peace of mind that housing can provide.

* * *

● (1415)

[*English*]

SHANNEN'S DREAM

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago, the Parliament of Canada came together in an ex-

Statements by Members

traordinary motion of solidarity by unanimously passing Shannen's dream to end the systemic underfunding of first nation education.

Shannen Koostachin had never seen a real school, but at the age of 13 she stood up to the brutal conditions in her home community of Attawapiskat First Nation and launched the largest youth-driven children's rights movement in Canadian history, forever changing the discussion about indigenous rights in Canada.

Shannen Koostachin never lived long enough to see this historic vote in Parliament or the beautiful school that is in her community. She died in a terrible highway accident at 15, but is now commemorated as one of the 150 most influential women in Canadian history.

If Shannen were here today, she would tell us that the fight is not finished. Yes, we have come a long way but children continue to have their rights denied through underfunding and a broken federal system.

Shannen had a dream that all her little brothers and sisters could go to a comfy school and have their dreams realized. It is our duty to make Shannen's dream a reality for this generation.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OPPOSITION TO INVASION OF UKRAINE

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the world has been watching what has been happening in Ukraine over the past few days with shock, concern, anger and outrage. Everyone is haunted by the ghost of war. These fears are founded, and it is hard to find hope in these dark times.

However, hope can be found where one might least expect it: in the streets of Moscow, St. Petersburg and places all across Russia, where thousands of Russians are courageously demonstrating. According to the AFP, over the past few days, Russian police have arrested 6,000 people. Nevertheless, the rallying cry of “no war” and the voices calling for peace continue to echo across the country.

The Russian people did not invade Ukraine; the Russian government did. Let us not conflate the two. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to commend these brave women and men who are risking their own freedom to march for peace, for Ukrainians, for Russians and for the world.

Oral Questions

[English]

UKRAINE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unbelievably our worst nightmare has been realized with war again in Europe. Vladimir Putin's illegal and unjustified full-scale war against our beloved Ukraine has shocked the free world. No matter the cost, no matter what roadblocks Russia tries to put up, there can be no excuses. Canada and the west must do whatever it takes to support Ukraine. Nothing should be off the table.

The cost of not supporting Ukraine in this fight is too great. It means that dictators, despots and thugs around the world can redraw the lines on the map by force and get away with it. This is a pivotal moment in the modern history of the world. What Canada does now matters.

Let us be clear. The illusion of the peace dividend from the end of the cold war has been shattered. The barbarian Vladimir Putin must be held accountable for the atrocity he is committing in Ukraine now. The bravery of the people of Ukraine has inspired us. The skilled Ukrainian military and the courage of the citizens who are taking up arms against Russian tyranny is nothing short of breathtaking.

Canada stands shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine.

Slava Ukraini.

* * *

HEDLEY LAKE

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a true hero we recently lost in my riding of Bonavista—Burin—Trinity. He was the last remaining survivor of the sinking of the SS *Caribou*, veteran Hedley Lake.

From Fortune, Newfoundland and Labrador, he served with the British Royal Navy during the Second World War and later was deployed to Korea. He was one of the 101 survivors of the German attack on the Newfoundland passenger ferry in 1942. At age 24, he did everything possible to save as many lives as he could following the fatal torpedo attack.

Loved by everyone in his hometown, he lived a full life to the age of 103 and brought so much joy and wisdom to everyone he met. I visited with him a couple of times and proudly presented him with a certificate for his 100th birthday, which brought a huge smile to his face. He truly appreciated it.

On behalf of the House, I want to send condolences to Mr. Lake's family and to the entire town of Fortune on this great loss.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the situation in Ukraine is heartbreaking and growing

more troubling by the hour. We know it is constantly evolving, and although Conservatives support the government's actions to date, we do believe there are things that could have been done faster. Many of the government's actions were too little, too late. One thing we are asking the Canadian government to do right away is to expel Russia's ambassador to Canada and recall our ambassador from Russia.

Will the government commit to doing that immediately?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada and Canadians are united in our support for the brave people of Ukraine and their extraordinary president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. This is a fight between freedom and tyranny. Ukrainians are fighting for themselves and for all of us.

As I rise for the first time in the House today, I would like to say to the people of Ukraine, from everyone in this House, how deeply we respect and admire them.

Slava Ukraini.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we agree with the minister wholeheartedly. We think there are more things we can do to help Ukrainian people. Ukrainians are fleeing their country and they are looking for a safe place, but we know they do not want to be permanent refugees. They want to be able to live in a safe, peaceful and sovereign Ukraine.

Canadians and Canada can be a safe haven for them. We have the opportunity right now to host Ukrainians who are being displaced by the Putin invasion. One of the things that we could do is allow visa-free travel for Ukrainians coming to Canada. Will the government commit today to remove the requirements for visas for Ukrainians coming to Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in her previous question, the Leader of the Opposition asked about the Russian ambassador, and I would like to address that.

Now is a time when everyone in the world must pick a side. A few brave Russian officials have spoken out against Putin's barbaric war. We encourage all Russians to oppose this war. Silence is complicity and following orders is not an excuse. When it comes to Canada's response, everything is on the table.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we look forward to a decision from the government on that very quickly.

Oral Questions

Many are saying what we have been saying for a long time and that is that Canada and the world need to end their dependency on Russian oil and gas. Canada imports almost \$1 million worth of Russian oil every day. The Prime Minister has spent the last six years waging a war on Canadian oil and gas. That needs to end. It is bad for Canada, and it is bad for the world. It only helps Russia.

When will the Prime Minister stop our dependency on Russian oil and instead work to get Canadian oil and gas to the world?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today Canada, together with our allies, took unprecedented action against a world-leading economy. We have hamstrung Russia's central bank, thus depriving Putin of access to his war chest. We have shown that sanctions do work and fortress Russia is exposed.

We agree that oil and gas do fund Putin's war machine, and we are working on that too.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Putin's regime has gone too far, and the West must take action. We are witnessing the biggest war in Europe since the Second World War. Russian troops and aircraft have attacked Ukrainian civilians in defiance of international law.

We believe the government can and should do more. Putin's regime can no longer enjoy a relationship with Canada. Will the Prime Minister declare the Russian ambassador to Canada persona non grata and immediately recall our ambassador from Moscow?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak directly to the brave people of Ukraine. Canada and Canadians are united in their support for the brave people of Ukraine and their extraordinary president. Ukrainians are fighting for themselves and for all of us. I would like to take this opportunity to say how deeply everyone in Canada admires and respects them.

Slava Ukraini!

• (1425)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my legislative assistant has family and friends in Ukraine. He told me how hard it is for the Ukrainians who have been displaced by the conflict to get to safety.

According to him, taxi drivers in Moldova are providing free taxi services at the border, hotels in Poland are providing free lodgings, and Romania is setting up camps to house Ukrainians. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians may flee the country before the war is over.

The Government of Canada is expected to make an announcement today. What will Canada do today to help displaced Ukrainians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I, too, have family in Ukraine. Our Canadian family spoke with our Ukrainian family on Saturday morning. We want to help our family in Ukraine and find a way for them to come to Canada. However, our family in Ukraine is refus-

ing. They said they wanted to stay there because they feel they need to fight for freedom.

We must help any Ukrainians who want to come to Canada, but we also need to help those who choose to stay in Ukraine.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I once again condemn Russia for its inhumane and unjustified attack on Ukraine. I would also like to express our solidarity and, I believe, the solidarity of the entire Quebec nation with the Ukrainian people in their courageous resistance.

History is waiting for us to do everything we can today to help the people of Ukraine protect their country and their families. I therefore offer the Deputy Prime Minister the Bloc Québécois's unwavering support to maximize aid to Ukraine and sanctions against its aggressors.

Can the Deputy Prime Minister provide details on what she expects from the opposition?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think Quebecers and Ukrainians share an enormous affinity and really understand one another.

I want to thank my colleagues for their remarks. Together with our allies, we imposed unprecedented sanctions on the Russian economy today. Fortress Russia is exposed. It is a myth.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is not only a war, but also a humanitarian crisis. Over 500,000 people have already fled Ukraine, and the European Union fears this number could rise to seven million.

The government can do more for these families. It can remove visa requirements to speed up the arrival of Ukrainians who want to take temporary refuge in Canada. It can automatically extend all existing permits and visas to alleviate concerns.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister maximize the Bloc Québécois's support and do everything possible to help these displaced persons?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands on a personal level that Ukraine is also experiencing a humanitarian crisis.

We also understand that Canada has a duty to help Ukrainians by providing a safe haven for them. That is why we have already begun to welcome Ukrainians, including those here in Canada who can no longer return home.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, more than half a million refugees have left Ukraine in the wake of the brutal invasion launched by Vladimir Putin. They are travelling in crowded trains, by car, and sometimes on foot, carrying hastily packed luggage, especially women and children. These people are seeking refuge while Putin is bombing their homes.

Oral Questions

The Liberals have turned their backs on refugees in the past and recently. The Ukrainian people need our help. Will the Prime Minister reduce red tape, suspend visa requirements and welcome Ukrainians who have been forced to leave their country because of Vladimir Putin's attack?

• (1430)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I am very pleased that the House has reached a unanimous agreement today and that all parties, including the Conservative Party, the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and obviously our government, support Ukraine and the courageous people of Ukraine. It is important, and I am proud of us.

As far as Ukrainian refugees are concerned, we are there for them. We have already done a lot, and we will continue to do more. They need our help, and they will get it.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are watching in horror as hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians seek refuge from the unprovoked Russian invasion.

The Liberals cannot recreate the disaster in Afghanistan, where those who risked everything to help our country were left behind. The European Union and, most recently, Ireland have already waived the requirements for visas for Ukrainians, and the NDP has been calling on the Liberals to do the same. However, this morning, immigration officials said that it is not even on the table.

Time is of the essence. Will the government immediately waive visa requirements for Ukrainians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member opposite that the world is watching in horror at what is happening in Ukraine, but I am also watching in pride at the incredibly brave resistance of the people of Ukraine.

It is important for us to say that we continue to support them in their fight. When it comes to refugees, of course Canada is there for Ukrainians. We have been and we will be, and we will have more to say soon.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada, like Ukraine, shares a border with Russia, our Arctic.

We can no longer afford to take our sovereignty and security for granted. Russia considers the Arctic to be its most important theatre, its most important region, and has spent considerable resources over the last decade building up capabilities there.

Will the government now act urgently to protect Canadian sovereignty and security by purchasing the F-35 jets, by fixing our

naval shipbuilding program, and by immediately modernizing NORAD's early warning system?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for raising the issue of Arctic sovereignty, which our government takes extremely seriously.

We are making landmark investments in this area, conducting joint exercises in the Arctic, purchasing six Arctic offshore patrol ships and enhancing surveillance. We will remain firm and unwavering in the protection of our Arctic, including in modernizing NORAD.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is not participating in joint military exercises between the United States and Scandinavian countries that have been taking place over the last year in the Arctic.

Russia supplies 40% of Europe's natural gas and uses this to threaten European democracies by threatening to cut off gas. Canada is the fifth-largest natural gas producer in the world.

Will the government now commit to fixing our broken pipeline approval process so that we can get new pipelines built to Atlantic tidewater and come to the assistance of European democracies by replacing Russian gas with Canadian natural gas?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the current situation in Ukraine certainly underscores the importance of energy security for Canada and for its allies.

We are working very closely with our colleagues in the United States and in Europe to not only address short-term energy volatility but also to explore long-term energy options.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for a month, Conservatives called on the government to provide Ukraine with lethal aid to defend itself from Russian aggression. The response was next to nothing, until it was too late.

The Ukrainian general staff urgently needs bulletproof vests; MREs, or meals ready to eat; canned goods like meat, fish and vegetables; and anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles. Thoughts and prayers are not enough. When will Canada deliver?

• (1435)

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this age of information and disinformation, I think it is important for us to be aware of the facts.

Canada delivered, successfully, \$7 million worth of lethal aid to Ukraine prior to the onset of the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. I want this House of Commons to know that not only did we deliver that \$7 million of aid, we also delivered \$3 million of non-lethal aid and \$700 million of economic support. We stand united with Ukraine.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is challenged on so many levels to act in a timely manner. National security and foreign affairs are where it fails its duty the most.

The government sat on its hands and watched 175,000 Russian troops move to Ukraine's borders and then launch an all-out invasion. Our allies have sent a five-billion-euro package of aircraft, vehicles, anti-tank weapons and stinger launchers. Small arms, sniper rifles and well-wishes do not cut it.

When will this government give Ukraine anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons, and—

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had multiple conversations with defence minister Reznikov from Ukraine, and we have provided support that Ukraine has requested, including lethal and non-lethal aid, including economic and financial aid, and we are in constant touch with Ukraine. In fact, Minister Reznikov called Canada a very, very dear friend, and I look forward to continuing to support him and his country in this time of need.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Vladimir Putin just put Russia's nuclear forces on alert. He is a dangerous man, and we must not forget that Russia is our neighbour to the north west. As the crow flies, Russia is not far from Canada.

The Prime Minister has been caught off guard because he neglected to modernize the north warning system and is still refusing to buy F-35s. Canada's sovereignty in the north is in jeopardy.

Is the Minister of Defence aware of this? What is she doing?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada will continue to work with its American partners to modernize NORAD so we can face current and future challenges related to Arctic protection and sovereignty. That is why budget 2021 includes \$252.2 million as an initial investment.

We will continue to work with our American partners to ensure our Arctic sovereignty.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that \$250 million will be used to pay an Inuit company to maintain the system, but the system is obsolete. It is finished. It is urgent that it be replaced. The government has known this for a long time.

We have another problem. Aluminerie Alouette in Sept-Îles was the victim of a cyber-attack. Cybersecurity experts believe that it

was a Russian attack and that cyber-attacks will definitely increase. The Prime Minister responded that everything is being done to ensure the security of Canadians, but Russia is attacking Canada's cybersecurity.

Can the Prime Minister confirm that Canada has the resources it needs to protect the government's systems and help private businesses defend themselves against Russia's attacks?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, cyber-attacks are part of Russia's strategy. It is essential that we strengthen our cybersecurity and protect our critical infrastructure. The Communications Security Establishment has the tools it needs to protect Canada and Canadians. I meet regularly with the chief of CSE.

We are here to protect cybersecurity for Canadians.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we wish to reiterate our steadfast support for the Ukrainians who are fighting to defend their country, their cities and towns, their homes and, most of all, the people they love.

Today, Canada and its allies must send a historic and unequivocal message to Russia, to Vladimir Putin and to all current and future leaders. Anyone who starts a war must pay a very heavy price. Aggressors must be isolated.

Will the minister work with her partners to exclude Russia from the G20, among other things?

● (1440)

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada and our allies have responded to Russia's invasion of Ukraine with tough, coordinated economic sanctions.

Our goal is to exert maximum pressure on Putin's regime in response to his blatant defiance of international law. The help we announced yesterday is one important contribution, and we will be sending more.

All options are on the table, and we will respond firmly to the escalating crisis caused by Russia.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the message sent by NATO countries must be historic and unequivocal. I will say it again: The price for starting a war must be as high as possible, and the aggressors must be isolated. All aggressors must be targeted.

Belarus has disgraced itself once again by allowing Russia to use its territory to launch its invasion of Ukraine. Minsk is reportedly even about to send in its own troops.

Oral Questions

Will the minister take steps to convince her partners to apply each of the sanctions imposed so far on Russia on Belarus as well?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with our partners.

We will continue to impose sanctions. We have already trained more than 33,000 Ukrainian soldiers. We have provided significant financial assistance. We have sent lethal and non-lethal aid, and we are strengthening our work in NATO in the west.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the primary victims of war are always the citizens, and this holds true again in this case.

Half a million Ukrainians have already had to leave their country, leaving behind not only their loved ones, but their entire lives. As parliamentarians, we have a historic duty to help them.

The government recently announced that it would match every donation Canadians make to the Red Cross, but only up to \$10 million. I think we can all agree that this cap is inappropriate. Will the government remove the cap and commit to doing everything it can to help Ukrainians who are in forced exile?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the Canadians who made generous donations to the Red Cross to support the Ukrainian people.

We will do more. We are monitoring the situation very closely, getting an understanding of what is needed and then providing appropriate support. This will be in addition to the \$50 million for humanitarian and development support that we have already provided.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada sends half a billion dollars per year to Russia to import its oil. The government has clearly chosen against building Canadian pipelines. The result was a decision by the Liberal government to instead fund the oppressive regime in Russia. The government boasts about giving \$120 million to Ukraine and then sends half a billion dollars per year to Russia to fund Putin's war machine.

Does the government now realize that its choice to kill Canadian energy projects has funded Russia's invasion of Ukraine?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the current situation in Ukraine underscores the importance of energy security, both in Canada and for our allies in Europe. We are working actively with our allies on both short-term and longer-term energy supply options with respect to ensuring that energy security is top of mind in Europe and is ongoing.

I will correct my hon. colleague, as 2019 was the last year when crude oil was imported into Canada. His figures are actually incorrect.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian oil is the most environmentally sustainable on the planet.

Refineries in my riding are part of the energy economy that is a fifth of our GDP.

Why does Liberal ideology always want to shut down Canadian oil in favour of production from dictators and people who violate human rights?

• (1445)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly the oil and gas sector in this country is an important part of this economy. It will continue to be an important part of this economy, but as I said to the previous questioner, the hon. member is simply incorrect. The last time crude oil was imported into Canada at the Irving Oil refinery was in 2019.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as long as we need oil and natural gas, we on this side of the House will always stand up for this Canadian energy sector.

Over the past 20 years, Canadians have purchased \$13 billion worth of Russian oil from Putin. I am sorry, but we do not need that. Meanwhile, the government's goal is to slowly eliminate Canada's energy potential.

Why, with its ideologically narrow-minded and closed-off attitude, is the government once again putting us in a position where we have to defend Canadian energy?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is one of the best countries for businesses. Under our government, oil imports have consistently declined, having reached their lowest level in 10 years.

This is certainly an important issue, and we are working with our partners in Europe and the United States to ensure energy security.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today's IPCC report is a dire warning about the consequences of empty Liberal promises. The brief window to ensure a livable future is rapidly closing. While Canadians are scared about the future, the Prime Minister is sticking his head in the sand. He is ignoring the science, handing out billions to big oil and gas and buying pipelines to fight the climate crisis. Canada has missed every single climate target. We have the worst record of any G7 country.

We are in a climate emergency. When is the government going to start acting like it?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the IPCC report shows what people around the world already know: that countries need to take bold action to tackle climate change and adapt actions to fight climate change. We must cut our emissions and build resiliency through our society. Canadians cannot afford another term of Conservative inaction on this file. Since we took office in 2015, our government has committed more than \$100 billion to climate action, and we are now developing Canada's first-ever national adaptation strategy.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the planet cannot afford the current environment minister. I encourage him to actually read the IPCC report, which has been described as “an atlas of human suffering and a damning indictment of failed climate leadership”. There we have exhibit one.

The government held 6,800 backroom meetings with big oil. It left taxpayers on the hook for a \$21-billion pipeline. It has given heavy subsidies to the oil industry, which is now talking about massive increases in production.

The planet is on fire. Why is the minister letting the big oil lobby lead him around by the nose when he should be standing up for Canadians and standing up for the planet?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my hon. colleague that through carbon pricing we went all the way to the Supreme Court against four provinces, including his province and my own, to fight to ensure we could use one of the best tools to fight climate change, which is carbon pricing. We are still unfortunately fighting in the courts against some provinces to continue to be able to fight for Canadians and for the health of our children and grandchildren when it comes to climate change.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

Many business owners from my riding of Ottawa South had to close their downtown establishments in the face of the illegal blockades. The occupation carried on for more than 20 days, and the cost to local businesses was simply staggering.

Could the minister please update the House on what measures the government is taking to help these very hard-hit small businesses?

Hon. Helena Jaczek (Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 19, 2022, I announced the Government of Canada would make an investment of up to \$20 million to provide non-repayable contributions to Ottawa businesses that had suffered financial loss due to the illegal blockades. This announcement reinforces our government's commitment to helping communities, families and businesses build a strong and resilient economic recovery.

Oral Questions

We continue to work to ensure businesses affected get the supports they need.

* * *

● (1450)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Coutts, Emerson and Windsor borders were cleared before the Prime Minister invoked the Emergencies Act. It was not required for demonstrators to leave Ottawa either. Security and financial experts say there were no real threats to Canada and no suspicious financial activity. A lawyer who actually helped draft the act said it was unnecessary, that the burden of proof was not convincingly met and that there was “no evidence” of a threat to the security of Canada.

What changed between the Prime Minister supporting it on Monday night and revoking it on Wednesday?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Emergencies Act was essential to law enforcement success in ending blockades and protests across the country. We always said we would not keep the act in force for any longer than was necessary, and we made good on that commitment. As we have said since the beginning, we are acting on the advice of law enforcement members and giving them the tools they need. We will continue to provide all of the enforcement tools that are required to maintain public safety.

I again want to thank all the members of the RCMP and law enforcement for the exceptional job they did.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister implied that protesters were terrorists. On Friday, the deputy director of FINTRAC was asked if terrorists were using crowdfunding platforms to launder money. He said, “We have not seen them. It is not a high risk”, but Canadians' accounts were frozen and sweeping powers were put in place. Last week, Conservatives asked if the Liberals got a legal opinion. The justice minister just said that he felt standards were met, which is not, of course, an actual legal assessment.

I will ask again. Will the Liberals release the legal opinion to Canadians? What changed in 36 hours?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Emergencies Act was brought in during the mid-1980s. In direct response to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in this country, it provides for rigorous parliamentary oversight both in this place and in the other place. It also provides for review and, most importantly, the act requires that every measure that is undertaken under the act be compliant with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We will always respect the charter.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Monday evening, despite the objections of the Conservative Party, the Bloc Québécois and even members of its own caucus, the government voted in support of the invocation of the Emergencies Act. By this time, the blockades and the protests had all resolved, yet unbelievably in less than 48 hours the government did a complete 180° and revoked the act.

My question is simple. What changed?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear that the impact of the illegal blockades was devastating. We saw borders shut, we saw Canadians laid off, and we saw our communities and our neighbourhoods in danger. That is the reason why we had to invoke the Emergencies Act, and we did so on the basis of non-partisan, professional advice from law enforcement. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police supported us. The Canadian Police Association supported us, and all of the measures that were exercised were done with restraint, professionally and in a manner that was consistent with the charter.

That is what we expected from law enforcement. They carried out the responsibilities with great professionalism, and we thank them for their work.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister used the Emergencies Act against protesters to freeze bank accounts, impound vehicles and arrest protesters, all of which could have been done with existing laws and bylaws. Canadians were led to believe that protesters were involved in acts of sedition and plots to overthrow the government, yet just charges relating to mischief were laid.

Other than dropping in poll numbers, exactly what changed in 36 hours for the Prime Minister to terminate the use of the Emergencies Act?

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I can very simply explain to my colleague across the way is that the emergency measures and the measures we provided to law enforcement worked. In fact, we saw the illegal blockades that were tormenting the people of Ottawa removed from the streets, and the threat against our international borders and trade corridors was successfully removed.

We relied on the information from the RCMP and our law enforcement partners to determine what was required. We provided them with the tools to do the job, and they did the job very ably.

• (1455)

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the government forced a vote on this country's first-ever use of the Emergencies Act. Forty-four hours later, on Wednesday, the government announced that it was revoking the declaration.

On Monday night, we were apparently facing the most serious national emergency of the 21st century. By Wednesday afternoon, however, the emergency had completely disappeared.

Could the minister explain, in detail, what happened and what kind of advice he got during those 44 hours, or will he admit that we never needed the emergency measures in the first place?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the use of the Emergencies Act was absolutely essential to allow law enforcement to put an end to the blockades and protests across the country.

We always said that the act would be enforced only for as long as necessary. As the RCMP commissioner pointed out, the Emergencies Act served as a big deterrent to the protests by incentivizing people to leave and giving the RCMP and its partners more authority in enforcing the law.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think the minister read from the wrong page because there are a lot of questions like that one which the government is refusing to answer.

The people have the right to know. That is why the Bloc Québécois welcomes the Prime Minister's promise to expand the inquiry into the use of emergency measures to include the role of the police, the convoy's funding sources and misinformation. However, that inquiry should not take place behind closed doors and under the government's control.

Will the government promise to make the inquiry public and independent?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am trying to understand the Bloc Québécois.

For a while, it said the government was not doing enough. Now it is saying the government did too much. Is the truth somewhere between the two for the Bloc?

They were targeted measures. They were time-limited and geographically targeted. They got the job done.

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in October, a constituent sent me an email. She works for the federal government. She said to me that if she did not get a vaccine, she would lose her job despite the fact that she was working remotely and could continue to work remotely. I received another message from a constituent who works for CP Rail. She had the same situation: get a vaccine or lose her job. She worked remotely in IT.

These mandates are hurting Canadian families at a time when everything is more expensive. Ontario is lifting vaccine mandates March 1. When will the Liberals lift the mandates or give us a plan to do it?

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, vaccines are the best way to bring this pandemic to an end. We asked employees of the federal public service to attest to their vaccination status and they have stepped up: 99% of public servants stepped up.

The policy will be reviewed every six months, and we will make sure that it is determined when it is still required. We know that having a fully vaccinated workforce means that not only are work sites safer, but so are the communities where this large population lives and works.

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my province of Alberta, some provincial restrictions have been lifted. Other restrictions, according to our premier, will be lifted very soon. With hospitalization rates decreasing, many constituents in my riding are asking why the Liberal government has no plan to remove all federal mandates.

Canadians want to get their lives back. When will the Liberal government listen to science and provinces to remove all federal mandates?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to hear my colleague speak about science. The science has been very clear, over the last year and a half, that what works is vaccination. Vaccination is not a punishment. Vaccination is protection. Almost 90% of adult Canadians have been vaccinated twice. We are very grateful to the scientists of this country and other places. They have provided us with vaccines that work and are effective.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my home province of Saskatchewan, Premier Moe has announced the dropping of public health measures. He was regularly consulting with his chief public health officer while holding press conferences to keep citizens informed. Many other provinces have announced their own plans to drop provincial mandates while regularly consulting their chief public health officers.

This government has, for the last two years, been saying that it is listening to science, but the federal chief health officer has been inconsistent at best. When will the government drop the mandates?

• (1500)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak about Saskatchewan. I want to con-

Oral Questions

gratulate my colleague, Health Minister Merriman, for all his hard work and collaboration over the last few months. We worked really well together on rapid testing, on PPE, on the Paxlovid treatment against COVID-19, and on vaccinations. I want to congratulate all the people in Saskatchewan for having been vaccinated in such large numbers.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the last few days what we have seen is a brutal military assault by Vladimir Putin's regime in Russia on Ukraine, on democracy and on the international rules-based order that protects countries and civilians around the world. There are countless men, women and children who as we speak are being killed, who are displaced and who desperately need humanitarian assistance.

Could the Minister of International Development please share with the House and with Canadians what Canada is doing to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Ukraine?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Etobicoke Centre for his strong leadership and for advocating for the people of Ukraine. Canada is deeply concerned by the deepening humanitarian crisis in Ukraine that has been caused by President Putin, and we are monitoring the situation very closely on the ground. This is why our government has provided \$50 million to support developing humanitarian aid and over \$620 million in loan offers. Just on Friday, we announced that we would match, up to \$10 million, the generous donations of Canadians to support Ukrainians through the Ukrainian Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross, and we will do more.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has now been eight months since a wildfire completely destroyed the community of Lytton in my riding. My constituents still need help to get back home.

Nearly two years ago, the government provided blank cheques without applications to select cities for housing projects under the rapid housing initiative in the major cities stream. What specific assistance will the minister provide to the village of Lytton to build purpose-built housing for vulnerable Canadians who lost everything?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's concern and advocacy for his community.

Oral Questions

The rapid housing initiative has far exceeded its initial targets. We have delivered over 10,250 new, permanent, affordable housing units for Canada's most vulnerable individuals, including those experiencing homelessness and those who are at risk of experiencing homelessness.

The member opposite knows, from his time as my critic, that we have a number of programs in the national housing strategy for different kinds of housing needs across the housing spectrum. I am willing to work with him to address the needs of his community.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Brantford—Brant includes two first nation reserves, one of which is the largest in the country. It breaks my heart when I review reports like the ones released by the Chiefs of Ontario and the Ontario Drug Policy Research Network. They stated that opiate deaths have doubled among first nations people in Ontario during the pandemic.

The opiate crisis was recognized by every party during this past election. How many more lives need to be lost before the government starts taking the opiate crisis seriously?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the member's deep concern for the mental health of all indigenous people who are struggling with so many crises that have led to increases of all kinds of substance use problems and disorders. We have been working closely with first nations communities on programs and supports that are indigenous-led and that will lead to better mental health outcomes and better health for indigenous people across the country.

I agree with the member opposite that we must do more, but it must be indigenous-led. That is the commitment of this government: to work with indigenous partners to ensure they have what they need.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Equinor Bay du Nord project presents an opportunity for Newfoundland and Labrador to accelerate economic growth coming out of the pandemic. Every barrel of low-carbon ethically produced oil from our offshore displaces a barrel of high-carbon foreign blood oil coming from Russia and the Middle East.

On December 6, 2021, the Environmental Assessment Agency approved Equinor to proceed with Bay du Nord. Will the environment minister respect the process and approve this project, yes or no?

• (1505)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the approval of this particular project is currently with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and therefore I am not going to comment on the process. However, I

will say that our commitment has been unwavering. In our commitment to support—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt the hon. minister.

I am going to wait until everything calms down before we start up again. We started off really well and we are near the end. Let us see if we can make it extend a bit.

Hon. minister, please proceed.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, we remain committed to supporting energy workers in Canada and certainly to working with Newfoundland and Labrador specifically, with the Lower Churchill project, which will provide Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with clean energy for decades to come, and the offshore emissions reduction fund to help offshore workers.

We have been there and we will continue to be there, working strongly with Newfoundland and Labrador to advance the economic agenda of that province going forward.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, public transit systems across Canada have been devastated by the pandemic. Effective public transit systems are essential for families, workers and communities.

Can the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance explain what our government is doing to help rebuild public transit?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by expressing my full solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

The hon. member for Châteauguay—Lacolle is absolutely right. That is why our government is providing municipalities with an additional \$750 million in funding for public transit. This funding will help fill some of the operational gaps caused by the pandemic.

This will include two important requirements. First, our provincial and territorial partners must match our contribution. Second, provincial and territorial governments must match the federal contribution.

This is good news.

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are getting slammed by the rising costs of housing, gas and groceries, among other things. A new poll reveals that over half of Canadians do not feel they can keep up with the rising cost of living.

While most people are falling further behind, the ultrarich are getting richer using tax havens and loopholes. Where is the help for everybody else? Canadians would benefit from a cap on cellphone and Internet bills, from national pharmacare and from policies to cool the housing market.

When can Canadians expect that help from the government?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we absolutely understand the challenges that Canadian families face with affordability, and that is why our government has acted and continues to act. We created the Canada child benefit, which is indexed to inflation. Today, a single mother with two children will receive up to \$13,600 from the CCB. We lowered taxes for the middle class twice and raised them on the wealthiest 1%. We provided seniors with a one-time payment of \$500 last summer and are increasing the OAS by 10%. There is, of course, early learning and child care, which will be transformative for young families.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, last week I met with Ilya and Liudmyla in my constituency office. They will soon be Canadian citizens and are excited to begin the next chapter of their lives. However, Liudmyla also told me that she is worried about her mom and her family, who are living in bomb shelters. In Ukraine, others are in long lines of refugees at the Polish border. Over 115,000 refugees are heading for safety in Poland. Thousands are also going to Romania and any EU country offering sanctuary. However, resources are being stretched to the brink.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs inform the House if Canada will provide assistance to countries opening their borders to the Ukrainian exodus?

• (1510)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Putin's war in Ukraine is an attack not just on the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, but on the idea of democracy in Europe itself.

We started preparing more than a month ago to welcome newcomers from Ukraine to Canada. On January 19, we started a process internal to our department to process applications on a priority basis and have processed more than 3,800 already. We have also created new pathways for people who are already here from Ukraine to make it easier for them to stay and to work while they are here so they can support themselves. In the very near future, we are going to be announcing new measures to make it easier and faster for Ukrainians who are fleeing the war to find safety here in Canada.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

RAIF BADAWI

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and I think that if you seek it you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That this House reiterate the motion adopted unanimously on January 27, 2021 and call upon the new Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, to, in the case of Raif Badawi, exercise his discretion under Section 5 of the Citizenship Act which authorizes him to grant citizenship to any person to alleviate cases of special and unusual hardship.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

I hear none. The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[English]

UKRAINE

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion. I move:

That, given the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified attack on Ukraine, the House:

(a) Condemns this unjustified and unprovoked attack, which was ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin, as a clear violation of international law, the UN Charter, and the rights of Ukraine to sovereignty, territorial integrity, freedom and democracy;

(b) Condemns the illegal recognition by the Russian Federation of the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk as so-called "independent states", and the 2014 invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and their illegal annexation of Crimea;

(c) Calls upon the Russian Federation to immediately end the targeting of civilian infrastructure, including, hospitals and schools.

(d) Call upon the Government of Canada, and all parties in the House of Commons, to support:

(i) The continued imposition of severe economic penalties, including sanctions, targeting President Putin's inner circle, including Russian oligarchs, and those who have supported this egregious violation of international law; and

(ii) The provision of support to the Government of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Armed Forces and the provision of humanitarian aid to the people of Ukraine; and

(iii) The issuing of an order of general application directing the CRTC to a new broadcasting policy that would remove state-controlled broadcasters that spread disinformation and propaganda from the CRTC's list of non-Canadian programming services and stations authorized for distribution, effectively removing Russia Today (RT) from Canadian airwaves; and

(iv) The removal of Russia from the SWIFT payment system, a critical part of the global financial system, an action which must be pursued in collaboration with international partners.

e) Stands unwavering and united in our solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay. It is agreed.

Routine Proceedings

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

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BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House that Thursday, March 3, 2022, shall be an allotted day.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of Committees of the House.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the Fourth Report later this day.

• (1515)

[*English*]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following four reports of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans: the first report, entitled “Striped Bass in the Southern Gulf of St. Lawrence and Miramichi River: Striking a Delicate Balance”; the second report, entitled “Implementation of the Mi’kmaw and Maliseet Treaty Right to Fish in Pursuit of a Moderate Livelihood”; the third report, entitled “Aquatic Invasive Species: A National Priority”; and the fourth report, entitled “Pacific Salmon: Ensuring the Long-Term Health of Wild Populations and Associated Fisheries”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to reports one, two and four.

While I am on my feet, I would like to thank all the staff who helped make this possible: the interpreters, the clerk and the analysts.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to two of those reports.

The first is the fisheries committee report on moderate livelihood. After extensive work at committee, Conservatives issued a dissenting report in response to the majority report. The majority report fails to adequately address the time-tested necessity of seasons for a reason.

Years of science and research have made it clear that conservation of our Atlantic lobster stock is dependent on the fishing seasons, which optimize the ability for stocks to reproduce. This leads

to a greater abundance and stronger ecosystem. We continue to see a lack of enforcement when it comes to out-of-season fishing. As the official opposition, we continue to call on the minister to fulfill her duties and responsibilities as laid out in Marshall decision and take immediate action to resolve the current situation.

The second is the fisheries committee report “Pacific Salmon: Ensuring the Long-Term Health of Wild Populations and Associated Fisheries”. While the crisis facing the Pacific salmon may not be new, the state of Pacific salmon stocks has never been so dire. Over the past six years, five different fisheries ministers have asserted that the legislative changes, resources and direction that DFO has provided were sufficient to restore and protect Pacific salmon.

However, the current state and continued declines of Pacific salmon clearly show the government’s assertions and actions have failed. In our complementary report, Conservatives call on the federal government to connect federal resources with plans and actions that are already mandated, known and proven to support the recovery and conservation of Pacific salmon stocks.

[*Translation*]

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present in both official languages the following two reports of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

The first report is entitled “A Study of Aircraft Certification in Canada in Light of Two Accidents Involving Lion Air Flight 610 and Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302”.

The second report is entitled “Emerging from the Crisis: A Study of the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Air Transport Sector”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to each of these two reports.

[*English*]

While I am on my feet, I would like to thank the hon. member for Niagara Centre, as well as all of the members of the committee, the committee staff and all of the witnesses who helped make these two reports possible.

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade entitled “Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine”.

[*English*]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if you seek it at this time, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

ONLINE STREAMING ACT

That the membership of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be amended as follows: Mrs. Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek) for Mr. Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry), Mr. Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle) for Mr. Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes) and Mr. Steinley (Regina—Lewvan) for Mr. Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe).

• (1520)

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have been unable to say yes, because as far as I can find in the records of what was sent to my caucus team, we were unaware of this motion. I cannot see any reason we would object except, of course, that the Conservatives may object to any unanimous consent motion we might put forward. However, in the spirit of good graces—

An hon. member: Oh, come on.

Ms. Elizabeth May: “Oh, come on”? Excuse me, I have been in the House for nearly 11 years, and it is only recently that every request for unanimous consent put forward—

The Speaker: I believe we are starting to get into debate here, so I am going to put the question. It is up to individuals to decide to give consent or not. I will leave it to individuals to make up their mind on that point.

All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move:

That the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The House resumed from February 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be back here. I will be splitting my time today with the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets.

The Liberal government has no understanding of Canada, broadcasting or its history, which may be why the Liberals originally regulated broadcasting through the Department of Marine and Fisheries.

The Aird 1928 Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting was the first to examine the state of radio broadcasting in Canada. Very few remember that commission. The nature of broadcasting has changed in the past century. However, there were conclusions that are still important to remember today. The Aird report was a model of efficiency that we would do well to take note of today. It was only 13 pages long, plus a few appendices. There was only one page devoted to programming content, which is where it was noted that, “Every avenue should be vigorously explored to give Canadian listeners the best programs available from sources at home and abroad.”

This flawed legislation, Bill C-11 does nothing to provide Canadian listeners with the best programs. If anything, it discourages creative programming.

Regulating programming made some sense in the 1930s, when the forerunner of the CRTC was created. Broadcasting then was limited to radio, and with a limited number of available frequencies, the government wanted to ensure a diversity of viewpoints and that Canadians had access to the airwaves.

What did not make sense was the intertwining of the regulator and the government-owned broadcaster created at the same time. Though the Liberals eventually realized that mistake, they continued to fail to understand the needs of Canadians and the nature of the dissemination of information in the 21st century.

The government is picking up where it left off in the last Parliament and brings us a new bill to amend the Broadcasting Act. What it does not bring is new ideas, nor does it attempt to properly define what it means by “broadcasting”.

According to Wikipedia, “Broadcasting is the distribution of audio or video content to a dispersed audience via any electronic mass communications medium, but typically one using the electromagnetic spectrum (radio waves), in a one-to-many model.”

Britannica tells us:

Government Orders

Broadcasting, electronic transmission of radio and television signals that are intended for general public reception, as distinguished from private signals that are directed to specific receivers. In its most common form, broadcasting may be described as the systematic dissemination of entertainment, information, educational programming, and other features for simultaneous reception by a scattered audience with appropriate receiving apparatus.

By definition, this bill is not about broadcasting. Instead, it is about extending the reach of the government in an attempt to control the Internet and free speech. It may be cloaked in technical language, amended in this paragraph here and that paragraph there, but there is no doubt, the intent is to limit the choices of Canadians.

We all know that the Internet bears no relation to traditional broadcasting. There is no frequency limitation online. The Internet is narrowcasting not broadcasting, as content creators can reach smaller segments of the population, which have not been served by traditional broadcasters.

Canada is home to many world-class writers, actors, composers, musicians, artists and creators. They do not need government rules that would hold back their ability to be Canadian and to be global successes. Canadian content creators make most of their money, about 90%, outside Canada. Social media platforms are global, and Canadians are taking full advantage, both as creators of content and in enjoying what is available.

• (1525)

Canadian social media stars do not want the government telling them what to do when it comes to their work as Canadians. When the Liberals claim that there is now an exemption for user-generated content, this legislation would allow the CRTC to regulate any content that generates revenue directly or indirectly, which means that virtually all content would still be regulated, including independent content creators earning a living on social media platforms such as YouTube and Spotify.

What has upset the Liberals, and the reason they want to provide us with a new definition of broadcasting with this bill, is that they have lost control. Back in the pre-Internet days, the state controlled broadcasting. People needed a licence from the state in order to start a radio or television station and that could not be obtained unless they agreed to allow the state to control their content. With the Internet, the state has lost its ability to control. Each day, about 720,000 hours of content is uploaded in YouTube alone. The Liberals seem to find that offensive. They want to regulate it, to somehow bring the Internet under their control as broadcasting used to work.

If this is simply a matter of the Liberals wanting a slice of the revenue pie to help offset their record deficits, there are easier methods than attacking all content creators. Instead of attempting to regulate the entire Internet, they could concentrate on large streaming services, perhaps those with half a million subscribers or more. Extracting money from streaming services to support Canadian content does not require the overreach the government is establishing.

Even with this, the government might want to think twice. Forcing streamers from outside Canada to contribute to the various Canadian talent development funds, for example, is full of risks. Fairness would say that if the government forces these entities to

contribute to the fund, then it must also allow them to access the money that the fund is generating. Rather than creating a level playing field, such a move would harm Canada's traditional broadcasters, especially those whose Canadian content is primarily public affairs or sports programming. How would the limited amount they spend on drama compare with the amount spent by streaming services that specialize in dramatic programming? In that contest, would anyone still be watching CBC?

Certainly, what this bill is not addressing is why we are regulating this. The Liberals, disturbing the free market, have never come across anything that they did not want to control, but just because they can introduce such legislation does not mean it is good legislation or that it should be passed.

For 20 years, there have been calls for the government to redefine the Internet and broadcasting. Wise people resisted the argument, realizing that the Internet, in many ways, is a true example of the democratization of communications. Groups with limited or no access to traditional broadcasting, such as indigenous Canadians, now have unlimited access and the ability to tell their stories without government interference. The Liberals want that to end.

There are perhaps 100,000 Canadians deriving all their income from their online activities. The government is not content with the income it is receiving from their taxes. It also wants to tell them what to create. It does not care if they have a relationship with their audience already.

Our cultural industry is flourishing without government. Bill C-11 should not pass.

• (1530)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the comments that the member made and I want to thank him for his intervention. I am very relieved when I hear members trying to make suggestions as to how things could be improved in a bill. I noticed he did that while talking about the number of subscribers and how it could perhaps be tied to receiving money, not for government purposes, as this member said, but to invest back into Canadian culture. That suggestion assumes that people who are uploading content are going to be subjected to the conditions within this bill. This bill specifically states that those who upload content, so influencers or people putting their own material out there, will not be subject to the provisions within the bill.

I am curious why the Conservatives are going down the same path that we saw them go with the previous version of the bill last year.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, speaking of the last bill, Bill C-10, the amount of opposition we received, especially from the younger population, from university students, was unbelievable. It was one of the times I received calls from students at the university level and from average Canadians complaining about the control that the government wants to have over broadcasting in general and specifically YouTube and Spotify. That is why this bill is no different from Bill C-10. That is why we need to vote it down and it should not be passed.

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[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my esteemed colleague how much control would be appropriate if he does not think that the government should have full control over broadcasting and online media.

[English]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I think the government needs to have less interference in this whole process and less control. I think less control is needed and less interference. That will make any bill regarding broadcasting and the Internet a better bill.

• (1535)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Qujannamiik, Uqaqtittiji.*

For many years our broadcasters and cultural workers have been losing revenue and suffering from unfair competition from web giants. That is why the NDP sees this bill as a good first step to leveling the playing field and making the web giants pay their fair share.

Does the MP intend to put an end to this injustice or, rather, protect the profits of the web giants?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the hon. member from the NDP. I think it is the opposite because, with that control that the government is seeking through this bill, it is going to also take away from the small players. That is not good for anyone. That is why I encourage the NDP to vote against it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is interesting. The member in his comments talked about this fear factor, as if the government is trying to control the Internet. I do find that unfortunate. It just amplifies the whole right-wing thinking that is coming from the Conservative Party.

I wonder if he feels that there is a bit of exaggeration that is taking place with the Conservative spin doctors to try to give that sort of an impression.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, the spin specialists from the Liberals are masters when it comes to spinning. The politicization of every single thing is leading Canada to be divided, which is what the government intended to happen, unfortunately. There is no right wing, no left wing and no extremists. This is a bill of control by the government over broadcasting. I think it affects freedom of speech and expression. It must be voted down.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on behalf of South Shore—St. Margarets to speak on Bill C-11, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act.

I was executive assistant to Canada's foreign minister when the Broadcasting Act was last amended in 1991. Email was a new thing. Foreign Affairs communicated with embassies through telex. There was no social media, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter or TikTok. Therefore, the revision to the Broadcasting Act under Bill C-11 is long overdue.

I will try to summarize what I believe to be the good, the bad and the ugly of this proposed legislation, and I will start with the good.

There are several important provisions in this legislation that I support, including the requirements to support the increased production of Canadian content by online service providers such as Netflix. The greater support of indigenous programming is also a good start. Coming from Nova Scotia, I also appreciate the increased support and focus on independent production of broadcasting material. It is a step forward that this bill protects the intellectual property of Internet service provider algorithms.

Now let me turn to the bad. We are hopeful that, when this bill reaches committee, the government will be open to amending it to deal with our primary area of concern, the regulation of speech on the Internet. It is true that in proposed subsection 2(2.1) and proposed subsection 4.1(1) the government has excluded individual users of social media from CRTC regulation. A similar commitment was made in Bill C-10 in the last Parliament but removed by the government at committee stage.

However, we were asked in Bill C-10 in the last Parliament, now Bill C-11, to trust the government in its commitment not to regulate individual freedom of speech. This is asking too much of Canadians who no longer trust the government. We should all be concerned when governments flaunt the law with the SNC-Lavalin scandal, abuse the public purse for family benefit in the WE scandal, ignore the views of those it disagrees with and legislate against free speech with the Emergencies Act.

Where are the “just trust me” elements of this bill? They come in proposed sections 4.1 and 4.2. This is the ugly part of the bill. Proposed section 4.1 exempts individual users of social media from the content control of the CRTC. While this is true to some extent, the government presents a legal pretzel in proposed section 4.2. Let me explain this confusing Liberal legal pretzel. The addition to this bill of proposed section 4.1, which says that censorship by the CRTC will not apply to individuals uploading content to an Internet service provider, sounds good, but what the government giveth, the government takes away in proposed section 4.2, where the government can regulate an individual's Internet content if it generates any sort of revenue. Without knowing or seeing these regulations, this is a broad power to censor the individual.

The government is telling Canadians not to worry and to just trust it. Canadians do not trust the government. We should be especially concerned when the government, under this bill, seeks to legislate on what Canadians can and cannot say if it generates any revenue at all. Individual content creators with fledgling businesses are now being asked to trust the government that, through policy and regulation, they will not be censored. There are no legislated guarantees in the bill to prevent them from being censored.

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In his last public address on April 11, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln said that “important principles may, and must, be inflexible.” Freedom of thought and speech are principles with which the Government of Canada must be inflexible in defending, so much so that Pierre Trudeau placed these inflexible freedoms in section 2 of Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It guarantees freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, the very freedoms that are core to our democracy. Our defence of them must remain inflexible, as Lincoln said.

Let me be clear that our freedoms have limits. For example, in a country like Canada, people cannot incite hate speech or other violent forms of language. Both our common law and Criminal Code have placed limits on that freedom. The distinctions in our Criminal Code are just and ensure the protection of the most vulnerable in our society. If the government wishes to seek further protections for those impacted by racism and other discrimination, I know my Conservative caucus is willing to co-operate, and the Criminal Code is the appropriate legislative vehicle for such restrictions.

● (1540)

Bill C-11 contains more disturbing open-ended online censorship regulatory power for the government. This legislation would allow the CRTC to regulate any content that generates revenue directly or indirectly in proposed paragraph 4.2(2)(a). That means virtually all content would still be regulated, including that of independent content creators earning a living on social media platforms like YouTube, TikTok and Spotify.

What does “indirectly” mean? The government asks for us to just trust it. Last Parliament, Conservatives were quick to point out the flaws in the nearly identical bill, Bill C-10. It was not just Conservatives sounding the alarm. Experts, lawyers, academics and many more people testified at committee and spoke publicly about the problems with the bill.

A former CRTC commissioner said that the bill would be like a hammer to intimidate freedom of expression. Today, given the continued development of technology and the conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic, much of that dialogue takes place on places like Facebook, Twitter and other websites. This bill would infringe upon the ability Canadians have to post online and to express themselves freely, even if their post “indirectly generates revenues”. Furthermore, the bill would infringe on the rights Canadians have to access content online, which means that the right to view freely would be infringed upon if the bill passes.

To all my colleagues, I ask if they trust the government to decide what they can say, read and watch online. Bill C-11 would give new, undefined power over the Internet to the CRTC, which was built to balance the needs of competing broadcasters, not those of citizens.

The only regulator of thought a Canadian should deal with is themselves. I can assure members that constituents in my riding do not want the censorship elements of this bill rushed through the House of Commons without thoughtful debate and hearings. They want clause 4 amended, and I trust the government will listen to Canadians in this respect at committee and amend this bill.

I ask members to be guided by the words of Lincoln that important principles must be “inflexible”. Be inflexible in defending free speech and amend the section of this bill that would give the government the ability to censor individuals on the Internet.

It is my hope that courage will manifest in all MPs and we can all work toward a Broadcasting Act that upholds the freedoms of Canadians, improves Canadian and indigenous content, supports independent production and does not stifle speech online.

● (1545)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in listening to the two Conservative speakers, one gets the opinion this is all about freedom of speech and the right-wing Reform concept that we do not need to have anything. We do not even need CBC. We need to recognize that the government needs to step up to the plate to ensure there is Canadian content and a lively arts industry in Canada. These are all very critical and important aspects of our society.

Does the Conservative Party, and particularly the member, not support the importance of Canadian content, our arts sector and the many contributions that makes to our society? If he does, how does he justify saying no to this bill?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, if the hon. member had actually heard the beginning of my speech, he would have heard that I outlined and said I supported the additional Canadian content this bill would engender in its process. I did say that.

The confusion seems on to be on the other side, which thinks just because it is not them that we do not support culture. I sat on community theatre boards. I have participated and helped my community in that regard.

Perhaps the hon. member should read subclause 11(10), which says that Canadian artistic and cultural expression must be dealt with and that the proportion of programs broadcast and devoted for specific genres would be regulated. I would like to understand from the government if it is going to tell us how many comedies, dramas or documentaries we can watch, when the CRTC is being given the ability to actually pick what genres we watch?

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I worked as an ethicist for 25 years and I am against censorship.

My hon. colleague was talking about freedom of speech, but freedom does not give people permission to say whatever they want. This is an important distinction. I would like to know how he plans to make that distinction if there is more regulation.

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[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, this is another issue I addressed in my speech. There are reasonable limits placed on freedom of speech through both common law and court cases, as well as through the Criminal Code, on things we can and cannot do. I think those are the appropriate vehicles to moderate and protect. We do not have unlimited rights under the charter. All rights, including freedom of speech, have some restriction on things like hate speech.

If there are additional areas or issues that need to be regulated in terms of criminal behaviour, that is the limit on which we should be focused in terms of limiting free speech. I do not think we should be using the CRTC, an independent and unaccountable government agency, to regulate free speech.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know the member may have touched on this aspect briefly in his speech, but living beside the United States, we are living beside a giant, and the web giants have incredible power. Our artists and our cultural producers really struggle against that dichotomy. Those web giants are really trying to circumvent our tax rules, our funding for Canadians cultural content and its discoverability.

I would like to hear the member expand a little more on how we can try to even the playing field to have more fairness for our important artists and the artistic sector here in Canada.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, that is a great question. As I did touch on a bit, and I get a little chance to expand on it here, the levelling of the playing field with online web giants in creating Canadian content is a very good aspect of the bill and one that I appreciate. With regard to the requirement for them to either produce Canadian content at certain levels or contribute to the Canadian content fund, my only challenge is to figure out where in the bill it balances and says what that level of support would be and what the money would be. That would be in regulation, I suppose, so we will have to see that, but it is a positive part of the bill.

• (1550)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today and speak to Bill C-11 and to continue this discussion that has been going on for quite a while. It has been at least a year since a bill similar to this one was introduced in the last session of Parliament. That bill, unfortunately, did not make it past the finish line, but what we have here is an improved version of the bill we saw before, a bill that tackled some of the challenges and obstacles, rightly or wrongly, that were put forward in particular by the opposition.

I want to go back to one of the comments that was made just a few minutes ago by the Conservative member who was responding to questions. He said something very important. I think it is important because it represents a lot of the narrative that we are going to hear over the next few days.

I forgot to mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for Parkdale—High Park.

We will hear a lot of the language that is being used. We just heard the previous member say that we do not want to allow the government to control what people watch. If anybody is going to be following this debate, I want them to pay close attention to the fact that as the debate goes on over the next few days or weeks, we will hear that language quite a bit from the Conservatives, because this is the exact language they used last time. It is language that tries to suggest to Canadians that the Government of Canada sits behind a desk and decides what people can watch and what they cannot watch. Nothing could be further from the truth. What the original bill did and what this bill is proposing to do now is not to regulate what people watch but to broaden the pool of what is available to them.

If someone has the perspective that we should be homogeneous in terms of everything that is in front of us since we live in North America, that there is no problem with being just like the United States, that we do not need our own individual identity and individual culture, then that is one thing. If that is somebody's position, although I disagree with it wholeheartedly, at least that would be the position of someone who still understands the facts. However, in fact this bill does not suggest that. What this bill does, and what I prefer, is that we provide Canadians with the opportunity to watch programming that is produced by Canadians and for Canadians as an option that someone can watch.

It is very similar to the CanCon rules that apply to radio stations. Right now, if someone in Canada has a radio station that broadcasts over FM and AM bands, they are subject to a rule that a certain amount of the content that is played during the day has to be Canadian content. I live in a border city that is not that far from Watertown, New York, and quite often we find radio stations trying to circumvent those rules. They would set up their transmission tower in Watertown, even though all of the broadcasting was happening in Kingston. It was being sent over to Watertown, New York, where it was then being broadcast from towers, and I am sure over 90% of the listenership was Canadian people because the broadcast audience was a Canadian audience in Kingston.

As the technologies develop and as we see new technologies come online and as the Internet becomes a dominant force in the consumption of content, it goes without saying that if we believe in making sure that Canadian content is in that pool of availability for those who are consuming it, we have to ensure that the Canadian content is there. That is the difference.

This is not about controlling what people see. I trust that we will have a more thorough debate on it this time around, but the rhetoric last time with Bill C-10 came down to suggesting that the federal government was trying to regulate all social media in order to determine what was put in front of people on the Internet, and that could not be further from the truth. This has always been about making sure that content is available.

Government Orders

• (1555)

What does this bill do specifically? Let me just highlight some of the important points. It brings those online streaming services under the jurisdiction of the Broadcasting Act because, as I previously mentioned, they are not. It will require online streaming services that serve Canadian markets to contribute to the production of Canadian content. This is what I was talking about. When Netflix or these other agencies are selling to Canadians, they have to invest in Canadian culture and Canadian-produced content.

Again, we might not agree with that. We might think that we are so globalized now that we can just get everything from wherever we want, and that should not matter. That of course is a position to take on this matter, but it is not the position that I take. It is not the position that the bill seeks to improve upon, because we recognize that it is extremely important that a portion of that content remains Canadian.

This also prioritizes support for content for francophone, indigenous, LGBTQ2+, racialized and other equity-seeking creators. It ensures online broadcasters will showcase more Canadian content, as I previously mentioned, and it modernizes outdated legislation to bring it into the 21st century.

It is also important to talk about what the bill will not do, despite the fact that I do not think that even my saying this now will change what we will hear. We are going to hear people in the chamber over the course of this debate say that it will do these things, but it will not impose regulations on content everyday Canadians post to social media. If someone uploads something to YouTube, they would not be subject to it even if they have a lot of followers, unless they are making money off it, in which case they would be similar to other businesses making money off it. There is an important point there that I will get back to in a second, because even those who do upload will not necessarily be subject to this.

It also does not impose regulations on Canadian digital content creators, influencers or users, as I said, and it will not censor content or mandate specific algorithms on streaming services or social media platforms. I have already touched on this point, but it is important to mention it again because this is what we will hear over the course of this debate. We will hear that the Prime Minister is personally sitting behind a computer somewhere trying to set an algorithm so that people see more content that he likes.

I know we are going to hear that, because that is the rhetoric that happened with Bill C-10. I have no doubt that we will hear it again with Bill C-11, although I really hope that we do not, but if history is an indication of anything in the House, when these issues come up, Conservatives know exactly which ones are going to be the ones that they can push that will engage public reaction whether or not they are true.

I want to go back to the first comment I made when I was talking about the things it will not do, which was to impose regulations on everyday Canadians. This is important, because the member who spoke previous to me brought up the fact that if someone uploads a video or content and they are making money off it, they are subject to legislation. That is actually not true. There are three criteria, and these are “and” criteria, not “or” criteria, that need to be met in order for something to be considered commercial content. In deter-

mining whether the content is commercial content, the regulator will need to evaluate three elements. One is whether the content is monetized, which goes to the member's comment a few minutes ago. However, two other things also have to be present. One is whether the content exists on another non-social media platform, such as Spotify, the radio or TV. The other is whether the content, such as a song uploaded to YouTube, has a unique international standard music number. Those are the three items that need to happen for this legislation to apply.

The previous statement that somebody would be subject to it as long as they are making money off it is actually not the case. There are three criteria that need to be met.

I know that my time is coming to a close, but I wanted to say what this really is about. I hope that everyone will at the very least support the fundamentals of ensuring that the Canadian pool of content remains robust and available to Canadians, because if we look back at the decades that have gone by, the last 70 years or so, the Broadcasting Act, even though it did not apply to the Internet, is what made sure that the content remained available for Canadians to see.

• (1600)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to questions and comments, I want to remind members that if they have thoughts and questions, they should hold on to them as opposed to shouting them out.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am sure that the member, had he been listening to my speech, would have known that at the beginning I said that I appreciated that the bill actually does say that the algorithms are protected. I did say that in my speech.

Specifically, since the member spent a bit of his speech discussing my speech, which was very flattering, I will read what the bill actually says:

In making regulations under subsection (1), the Commission shall consider the following matters:

(a) the extent to which a program, uploaded to an online undertaking that provides a social media service, directly or indirectly generates revenues.

In (b) and (c), the bill does not say “and/or”. It does not say any of that. It lists three different things. Any one of those things, individually, can be regulated according to the act.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent point. I want to make sure it is known that I did not suggest that the member was saying that the government could control the algorithm. I said that I heard that last time and I expected some comments to that. This member certainly did not comment about that in his speech. I listened attentively to what he said.

His is an excellent point. My understanding is that it needs to be all three of those things. Therefore, I think that this should be one of the topics that comes up in committee, to make sure that this is the case, because it should be that way. I certainly read it to be that way and that is my interpretation. I hope that when the bill gets to committee, that can be clarified.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I am hoping he could provide more clarification on a glaring problem. Artists in the cultural sector and in broadcasting are losing a huge amount of money, some \$70 million to \$80 million a month, and there is no end in sight because of clause 4.1.

I would like some assurances from the member about the notion of freedom of speech, the lifeblood of the Conservative Party, which, unfortunately, is what caused the hold-up with the previous version of this bill and which is costing our creators and artists \$70 million to \$80 million every month.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. I agree that this keeps coming back. Every month that goes by, more and more people are suffering as a result of this. I think it was very unfortunate the way this bill played out in the winter and spring of 2020. It inched along so slowly. We saw delay after delay and then, at the last minute, just before the House and the Senate were going to rise, the bill, Bill C-11, was voted on.

At the end of the day, I agree with the member that making sure we protect Canadian culture and Canadian content is absolutely imperative. The quicker we can get this through, the more we will be able to do that.

I know the member is from the Bloc. Quebec certainly has a strong and robust sector as it relates to film and audio in one of our official languages, but there are so many other companies throughout the rest of the country that are equally doing so in English and we need to continue to preserve that.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, in my lifetime I have watched a dramatic shift in the media landscape, from local newspapers to the conglomeration of these multinationals. We have gone through from Web 2.0 to Web 3.0.

Has the government made consideration for the shift in the distributed model of user-created content? I will give an example. For instance, we have a company like TikTok, which provides content creator funds everywhere else, but not in Canada.

How are we going to ensure that the individual creators who are Canadians and who are creating content are adequately compensated, and not create a situation where the fund just goes to the multinational conglomerates that have completely captured our traditional media?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member raises an excellent point. I will be the first to say I do not have an answer to that. I certainly hope that the committee will look into this issue at that stage.

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If what the member is suggesting goes beyond just this piece of legislation, then that is something we need to tackle because it is absolutely detrimental to Canadian culture and Canadian identity, and we need to continue to make sure that the proper funds are available for product and content that is made in Canada.

• (1605)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, since I last rose five days ago, Mr. Putin in Russia decided to, very unceremoniously and aggressively, invade a sovereign nation. I want to express my absolute solidarity with the people of Ukraine, in terms of showing gratitude and appreciation for their bravery in the face of this blatant aggression and violent and unlawful act, and to simply state, in terms of representing my constituents of Parkdale—High Park, that I will continue to advocate with every fibre of my being for the well-being of Ukraine and for the well-being of Ukrainian-Canadians, for assisting them in any way, shape or form in terms of assistance militarily, assistance with their defence and assistance with immigration, and in terms of restoring peace to their land.

I want to turn now to Bill C-11, and I will start with Canadian content creators.

I learned a heck of a lot about Canadian content and Canadian creators during the course of the 42nd Parliament, when I served as the parliamentary secretary to the minister of heritage at the time: the current Minister of Foreign Affairs. What I learned about was the voluminous contribution that these content creators made to the Canadian economy. In some respects, it is either equivalent to or outstrips contributions from sectors such as the mining sector in this country. It is staggering the amount of GDP output that is attributable to Canadian content creators. Around \$19.7 billion of Canada's GDP and approximately 160,000 jobs are linked to things such as publishing, writing, music, producing theatre, producing film, producing television products, etc.

My riding of Parkdale—High Park, which I have the privilege of representing for the third straight time in this Parliament, is home to many of these creators. They have explained to me what they do for a living and how it contributes to the Canadian economy, but they have also said where their trade and craft is suffering and they have walked me through these steps. We have heard from the member for Kingston and the Islands and some of the other members in this debate who have talked about where we were about 30 years ago, when we had the Broadcasting Act, and where we are now. Where we are now is a fundamentally different place. People consume, view and listen in a completely different manner from how they did 30 years ago when the Broadcasting Act was last touched.

Why is this relevant? It is relevant because it is incumbent upon us, as parliamentarians, to make sure that our laws are responsive to the current state of the nation. Our laws need to be reflective of current norms, current technological features and current aspects of day-to-day life. That is really critical. For decades, our system guaranteed the creation of Canadian movies, TV shows and music that made us proud because we ensured that traditional broadcasters, such as Bell and Rogers, were contributing to such Canadian content.

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Why is that critical? It is critical because we live next to a very large nation that creates a whole lot of cultural content. It is very easy to be dwarfed by that content, particularly in its English-language form, if we are not supportive of Canadian content. We adopted these ideas about mandatory contributions financially from Canadian broadcasters, which are usually through a television screen, ensuring that they could then help us create the next *Kim's Convenience*, the next *Schitt's Creek* or the next *The Beachcombers*. I know I am dating myself. I am a bit older than I look. However, that kind of cultural content is critical. What we have seen is an erosion of that kind of cultural content because we are no longer asking these new types of broadcasters to contribute, and because the system simply has not kept up.

Who is responsible for all that? I will be blunt: All of us are responsible for all of that, because we have not acted quickly enough to deal with Spotify, Apple Music and YouTube. When we legislated this most recently, which is three decades ago, those things did not even exist. In fact, the Internet was still in its infancy, probably just a plaything of the U.S. military at the time, because we are reaching back to around 1991. Although I prefer Spotify, most Canadians today get their music from YouTube Music. That is an incredible statement. It is not from the radio. It is not from vinyl or cassettes, but from one particular platform: YouTube Music.

Unless we directly regulate that type of platform and ensure that it is contributing to the continuity, creation and support of Canadian content, we could see great Canadian musicians or great Canadian musical acts simply go by the wayside. Do we want to have the next Tragically Hip, the next Arkells, the next Drake, the next Justin Bieber, etc.? I desperately want to see that. I want to see that for our country and I want to see that for the children I am raising, but we cannot see that unless we actually take an active step to support this industry.

• (1610)

What we have is Canadian broadcasters from the traditional mould, such as Bell and Rogers, playing by one set of rules, and we have streaming platforms playing by entirely another set. There needs to be one set of rules for all.

What would this bill do? We have heard a little about this during this debate. The bill would provide the CRTC with express powers to require broadcasting undertakings, including online undertakings, to make financial contributions to Canadian content and to its creators.

Over these last years, as the member of Parliament for Parkdale—High Park, I have heard basically a plea that this exact kind of measure be put into force. I have heard it from ACTRA. I have heard it from the Directors Guild of Canada. I have heard it from the Writers Guild of Canada. I have heard it from the Canadian Association of Broadcasters. Over and over again, they have said that unless we support their industry, in terms of where it is being viewed or seen now at that level of broadcasting and not just in its old modality, they are in jeopardy. All the Canadian content they create is in jeopardy.

Why is that important? Everyone in this chamber chuckled about *The Beachcombers*. Those touchstones are significant because they tell a Canadian narrative. That is good, right and proper, because it

is important, as a nation-building exercise, for people to see themselves reflected in what they see and hear and also to learn about themselves, in terms of what they see and hear.

That is why I hope another aspect of this legislation gets touched on in this debate. I think it is important, because we are trying to also make sure a Broadcasting Act three decades later reflects the reality of Canada. The city I represent boasts that it is one of the most diverse, if not the most diverse, city on the planet. That is the city of Toronto. We would like to see the broadcasting offerings that are available, including online, reflecting that diversity and reflecting people of colour: racialized people, immigrants, Black Canadians, etc.

There is a specific provision in the legislation that actually references promoting indigenous language vitalization. That is something I also had the ability to work on in the 42nd Parliament. It is something I feel very strongly about. The way we do that and keep moving the yardsticks forward is by amending the broadcasting legislation.

In these last two and a half minutes, I want to deal with what this bill is not about. We heard a great deal about this in the last Parliament, and I am very keen to ensure we do not hear about it in this Parliament, particularly now. My opening comments were about Ukraine. We know that not just this country, but the planet, is seized with addressing misinformation and disinformation right now. To purport incorrectly or benignly, or to misconstrue what is in a piece of legislation versus what is not, is not helpful for the discussion about this legislation, nor is it helpful to the public discourse in this country, let alone on this planet. I mean that very seriously.

This bill has a specific carve-out, and the carve-out is clear. User-generated content, video games and news media will not be affected by the proposed changes. It is quite clear that what we are doing would ensure that social media allows people to share their thoughts online, and that is for the most part a very good thing. We agree it is vital for Canadians to be able to express their views, which is why the bill specifically states that the regulator cannot make regulations that infringe on freedom of expression on social media or online platforms. That is critical, because we are not talking about individually generated user content, unless that content is being commercialized, which is a point that was adequately addressed by the member for Kingston and the Islands. It is important that people understand this fact, and that this fact does not get misconstrued in the context of this debate or when this bill hopefully moves to committee.

Why is this important? It is critically important, in terms of taking outdated legislation and moving it into the modern age three decades hence. It is also important because it would allow us to ensure that Canadian stories and narratives are being told. It is important for ensuring there would be a playing field. The simple principle is that if something is benefiting from a system, which clearly the YouTube and Spofifys of the world are, then it needs to contribute to that system.

Another participant in this debate mentioned that other jurisdictions have already taken the step of ensuring contributions from on-line streaming platforms. We would simply be making sure that Canada levels the playing field internationally and also vis-à-vis traditional broadcasters and online streaming broadcasters.

I hope that is a concept that all members and parties in the House can get behind.

• (1615)

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed working with the member on the justice committee.

We are both lawyers, and this is a very unique scheme in the way it has been designed. In fact, I will actually quote from Michael Geist, a respected professor: “The bottom line is that the potential scope for regulation is virtually limitless since any audio-visual service anywhere with Canadian subscribers is caught within the rules.” That means this would create this giant scope and then it would allow the government, in certain instances, to put exemptions.

Would it not have been much more intelligent, a much better way and the way that we normally draft things, to just cover the area we want to cover, as opposed to giving this giant scope to the government and then exempting what it chooses to exempt?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite's service on the justice committee and I look forward to working with him in this Parliament.

I think he makes an interesting point on the tactic taken with legislative drafting. However, one thing is clear in the context of the debate on this bill, and it was quite vociferous regarding Bill C-10 in the 43rd Parliament: People want a surety that user-generated content by an individual person posting something to a platform like YouTube will not be caught. That is why we put an express exemption to that very effect into this legislation.

This has been cast wide because the platform and the nature of the streaming services are wide. However, with an adequately tailored exemption, I think it is clear to Canadians that we are not here to limit freedom of expression unnecessarily. What we are trying to do is to actually empower freedom of expression by creating more of that expressive content and by empowering the creation of more Canadian content through this funding model.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, the notion of “fair share”, of paying one's fair share of taxes and contributing one's fair share of Canadian content, can be found throughout Bill C-11.

How will the government ensure, with Bill C-11, that the web giants will not be the ones deciding what is considered a fair share?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I like the question asked by the member for Trois-Rivières. I learned a great deal of French in that city 30 years ago.

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I want to point out that this is not just about regulating web giants, but also about spelling out the type or number of regulations that will govern them and the amounts they will have to pay.

Our strategy is not to have a laissez-faire system or a context where the companies decide. We are the ones who are going to decide how to regulate the companies and how much they are going to pay. The same approach will be used for taxation.

As for the next steps, we will continue the fight against hate and fear, which are also a major issue in the digital world.

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Qujannamiik, Uqaqtittiji.* The Nunavut Film Development Corporation noted an array of challenges to Nunavut's competitiveness in the industry, such as an absence of tax credits, bandwidth challenges, limited program budgets and expensive production in the north.

Can the member speak to how the amendments in Bill C-11 can redress such challenges to better support Inuit, first nations and Métis cultural creators?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I think that is a critical question. When we carve out the promotion of indigenous culture and particularly indigenous languages in the legislation, which has explicitly been done, we create an opening to address the exact problem the member has highlighted.

We know that we need more indigenous voices and indigenous content online. We also know that supporting this sometimes costs more money. However, having the legislation crafted as it is right now, with that specific exception and specific prioritization, allows us the opportunity to dedicate some of the funds coming in from the Amazon Prime's of the world specifically to the promotion of Inuktitut and about 90 other indigenous languages in this country.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I will keep it brief. The hon. parliamentary secretary touched on this. We have become increasingly alarmed by disinformation sites and, of course, as we are horrified by Russia's aggression against Ukraine, we realize that Russian disinformation was authorized by the CRTC. I think we were outraged to find that Russia Today was being broadcast to millions of Canadians.

To my hon. colleague, this is not within Bill C-11, but can we be sure that this sort of disinformation will never be licensed again?

• (1620)

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, believe me, I share the member's concerns about Russia Today and Sputnik. I will be very candid with her in saying that we have an issue and have raised it with the CRTC. It is ultimately the independent regulator, but I am very confident and pleased by the fact that Bell, Rogers and Telus have all committed to removing Russia Today from access in Canada.

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Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very excited to speak to the bill today.

In the last couple of minutes, I heard the words “misinformation” and “disinformation”. In our own society, it seems like information put out there by the woke society is good information, but if somebody has a difference of opinion, it is horrible information.

I want to give an example from my own province of New Brunswick, where this is prevalent. When I was an MLA from 2010 to just last summer, there were two major projects in New Brunswick. One was the Energy East pipeline and the other was a natural gas project. At the time, natural gas did not get widespread support and it ended badly: We never developed the industry. With the Energy East pipeline, we could not get support from the Province of Quebec at the time, for whatever reason, and that project did not happen either.

If we look at what is happening around the world today, it would be misinformation to tell Canadians, particularly New Brunswickers, that those two projects were not worthy. We can see what is happening in the world today, and if we look at the energy sector around the world, New Brunswick is very well positioned in its gas industry to have a pipeline sent from Alberta to both New Brunswick and Montreal. These would have been very good projects. However, we are not going to hear that from the Liberal Party of Canada. We are also not going to hear it from the Green Party of Canada. We cannot have it both ways.

What do we see here today? The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is at stake. I am not a lawyer, so I will speak about this in general terms that are understandable. Subsection 2(b) of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms says:

freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression...freedom of the press and other media of communication

This subsection guarantees us all the liberty to express ourselves without reserve or coercion from the state. That is a core principle of our constitutional heritage in this country. Although it was embedded in the charter in 1982 by the Prime Minister's own father, it goes back hundreds of years through the English liberty this parliamentary system transmitted from one generation to the next. As Sir Winston Churchill said, “Everyone is in favour of free speech. Hardly a day passes without its being extolled, but some people's idea of it is that they are free to say what they like, but if anyone says anything back, that is an outrage.”

We see that in this country. I understand the precedent of a war and how that is the biggest issue of our time, but in this country, all too often the woke community can go out and spew what it likes, drive it down everybody's throat and then try to compare us to American politicians, which could not be any further from the truth. That is an example of misinformation and disinformation.

This bill seeks to take away that right and those freedoms. Do not take my word for it. I can quote directly from one of at least two former commissioners of the regulatory body that would be empowered under this bill to control Internet content. Peter Menzies described the bill as an assault on freedom of expression. Another former CRTC member explained that it would allow political appointees to determine what we see and what we say on the Inter-

net. Senator and great writer David Adams Richards, from my home community of Miramichi, said something along the lines of it being like a knife through the heart of the freedom of expression we enjoy in this country. These are quality names and very well known individuals who have some very strong points on this topic.

I forgot to mention that I am splitting my time with the member of Parliament for Haldimand—Norfolk.

● (1625)

There is a lot we do not know about this bill because numerous of its amendments were voted on before they were even made public to the committee. The Liberals want a series of bureaucrats, unnamed, unelected and unknown, to decide what Canadian content is heard and not heard.

I will give the example of mainstream media. Mainstream Canadian media often runs American political content without Canadian content. It gives a strangely outward and seriously biased opinion on the content and feeds it to the Canadian public without any local content, and it includes its opinion each and every time. However, we pay for this as Canadian taxpayers. Long gone are the days when media put out the facts and let the public decide what was right, what was wrong, what was Liberal, what was Conservative. The public used to determine these things of their own accord. As a country, we got along better then, and we need to somehow get back to that.

Another example is a community association in a Canadian neighbourhood telling us about local food drives. It is in a Canadian neighbourhood, it has a Canadian author, it has a Canadian story, it is a Canadian initiative in a Canadian city and it is read almost exclusively by Canadian readers, yet it would not be considered, presumably, Canadian content and therefore would be demoted.

That is just the daily pedestrian content we get online. What about the more conscientious stuff? The government is going to decide what kinds of political views are Canadian. Of course, endorsing the Prime Minister's left-wing agenda and his ideology will be a prerequisite of Canadiana. We can be sure of that. Liberal Party members have effectively been saying for generations that they and only they represent Canadian values and, therefore, that only the values they espouse would be considered Canadian for the purpose of this act alone.

Not only can the Liberals not tell us what content would be acceptable and what would not, but they cannot tell us who would be subjected to the bill. Originally, they had an explicit exemption for users, the everyday Joe and Jane who post stuff online. It is called user-generated content. The justice department said not to worry, that the bill would not affect any of them because there is a very specific exemption that excludes them. However, the Liberals showed up at committee and, all of a sudden and just like that, here we go again. It is another example of a government that cannot be trusted.

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What is the issue here? The Liberal government has introduced Bill C-11, formerly Bill C-10. Last year, the Liberals passed Bill C-10 in the House of Commons without allowing a full debate at the heritage committee to address many outstanding concerns from experts and parliamentarians on how that legislation would affect Canadian rights and freedoms on the Internet. Canada's Conservatives support creating a level playing field between large foreign streaming services and Canadian broadcasters while protecting the individual rights and freedoms of all Canadians. Canada is home to many world-class writers, actors, composers, musicians, artists and creators. Creators need rules that do not hold back their ability to be Canadian and have global successes. Earlier I gave an example of Senator David Adams Richards, a well-renowned writer from Miramichi.

This bill is a near copy of the Liberals' deeply flawed Bill C-10, and it fails to address the serious concerns raised by experts and Canadians. While the government claims there is now an exemption for user-generated content, the legislation would allow the CRTC to regulate any content that generates revenue directly. People need to be free to see anything that is available so they can make their own decisions for themselves, a liberty we have in this country, on what is important, what is right, what is wrong, what is just and unjust and what the facts are.

Now more than ever, Canadians need to know that their freedom is their own, that it does not belong to politicians, bureaucrats and judges, that it belongs to each of us and that on this founding principle, people can feel free. Freedom is paramount. It is the one liberty we all want and need, and each of us is prepared to fight for it, especially those in the Conservative Party of Canada.

• (1630)

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in his remarks, the member alluded to a discussion that was being had around RT, Russia Today, and misinformation. I heard the member suggest that the Liberal government considers misinformation to be only things it does not agree with or does not like. I am wondering if the member could clarify for me if that is indeed what he said and if he does agree that Russia Today is full of misinformation about the war in Ukraine.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Madam Speaker, everybody knows the propaganda system that comes out of Russia. That was not part of my speech. I do not disagree that it is full of propaganda.

My point is that every time the Liberal government brings a bill forward, every single time, it borders on a Communist-type policy. It borders on it every single time. The Liberals are trying to take away what we can see online, what we can read online, where we can shop and who can advertise to sell us something online. It is clear that the government does not want the people of Canada to think for themselves about their own content.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Miramichi—Grand Lake for his speech.

I am a little concerned about my colleague's perception of freedom of expression. I do not believe that freedom of expression is restricted on traditional radio or television. However, I would like

my colleague to put himself in the shoes of a creator who has spent the last year or year and a half creating, composing music, putting together shows and paying a director and musicians. This creator puts on a great show after the pandemic. There are people in the room who film the show with their phones and then upload it to social networks and YouTube. The creator invested their own time, paid musicians, paid all kinds of people, but everyone is going to watch the show for free.

How could the member tolerate that? It would be like opening the creator's wallet and taking out their money. I would like the member to understand the significance of this issue. It would be tantamount to stealing money from the creator's pocket.

[English]

Mr. Jake Stewart: Madam Speaker, I understand that issue very well. I was in smoke-filled bars from the age of 17 until 30 years old. I was a singer in a band, and I travelled all over the place. I remember writing an album and having to worry about that very thing. We would go to a bar when cellphones were just starting to be a thing, and somebody would make a recording that was not asked for. Then maybe that song, which had not been released yet, would end up on Facebook. I understand the issue very well. I do sympathize. That is an issue that happens very often in our society.

However, I think the issue here today is that, with each new bill brought into the House of Commons by the Liberal government, there is a freedom that is being taken from us, every single time.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I need some clarification. We know that, in digital media, royalties paid to Canadian creators are three times lower than those to traditional media producers. I look at this bill and it seems that it would make the discoverability of Canadian content producers so much higher, which would really provide opportunities.

Does the member have a solution, if he thinks that this would not work?

Mr. Jake Stewart: Madam Speaker, that is a very good question. Part of the thing for an artist and a creator is to take control of their work. They have to have the copyright for their work before they put it out. There is always a danger when they are performing live. Especially with music, there is a great danger. I appreciate the question. I do not think this bill is solving that issue. I think it is infringing on our freedoms.

• (1635)

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Madam Speaker, social media platforms and Internet search engines are the main source of news and information for the majority of Canadians. Canadians rely on online sources, not just for information but to share their unfiltered stories and their creative expressions.

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The Internet is a powerful resource. It has made presidents, prime ministers and even celebrities. The immense power of the Internet can be used as a shield or as a sword. As a shield, it is an opportunity for the average person to participate in the media and to be able to showcase their talents without going through big broadcasting networks. As a sword, it can be used as a form of control and a limitation on free speech.

Woe onto us if the Internet falls under the control and the force of a government that will use it to divide, demonize and control. We have seen that authoritarian governments have gone so far as to systemically censor and limit thought, free speech and freedom of the press by using the Internet. While we want to trust our governments, unfortunately we have seen that the Liberal government has a not-so-subtle agenda of controlling and overreaching.

As lawmakers, we must resist the desire to distrust and unduly control Canadians in a free and democratic society. We must also resist any government initiatives to try to mould Canadians' opinions and preferences by limiting their online options and opportunities. Neither the Liberals nor any government regardless of their political stripe can be trusted to be neutral referees of what is preferred speech and preferred content.

The Prime Minister's response to one of the biggest protests of our time is evidence of this. We saw that our Prime Minister refused to listen to the legitimate concerns of fellow Canadians, even when those who trucked from clear across the country came to just have a conversation, choosing instead to label them as racist, misogynist, anti-science people with unacceptable views. This was done in order to silence and cancel their voices.

A Prime Minister who can hardly tolerate differences of opinion within his own cabinet and party cannot be trusted to respect the different opinions and preferences of Canadians. Freedom and the opportunity to share information and content must be protected and primarily it must be protected from government and from governmental interference.

Bill C-11, the online streaming act, would open the doors to government control of Canadians through their Internet activity and speech. We have heard the concerns about the government in the last iteration of the bill. Unfortunately, the same concerns remain with the current bill. The hon. minister has stated that the intent is to level the playing field for Canadian creators and producers. It is argued that Bill C-11 would make it easier for Canadians to access Canadian content. While this objective is noble, unfortunately this legislation continues to be fundamentally flawed just as the previous bill was.

Primarily it gives the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission the power to control what Canadians can and cannot access and view. As a result, the government inevitably can begin to drift into the authoritarian territory, tempted to block, hide and promote certain content. Under the new bill, as we scroll through the latest videos on YouTube or do Google searches, the government's algorithms will decide what pops up in our search. This is an attempt to control and censor any content the government finds inconvenient or un-Canadian.

In effect, the government would control what we see when we search for a video on YouTube or conduct a search on Google. By so doing, the government would be picking winners and losers by predetermining which content creators are worthy of viewing and hiding content the government thinks Canadians should not see.

• (1640)

More nefariously, this legislation could be used to control and limit speech and opinions that differ from those in power. I believe the far-reaching impact of this bill is potentially more dangerous than we can ever imagine. When it comes down to it, the problem with this legislation is that it leaves the impression that Canadians cannot be trusted with their online choices. The Liberals do not think that Canadian creators can thrive without their meddling.

The reality is that Canada has produced a tremendous amount of art and talent to share with the world. They do extremely well when compared with their global counterparts on platforms such as YouTube. This means that before the Liberals started meddling with regulating the Internet, many Canadians had already had successful media careers online without government oversight.

Also, what is very problematic with this bill is the lack of clarity around the definition of what constitutes Canadian content. In addition, because of the stringent Canadian content requirements, many new emerging artists would not be considered Canadian enough to be protected and promoted under Bill C-11. These requirements would also adversely impact minority communities in Canada who rely on cultural content from their home country. Canadians may be blocked from accessing ethnic streaming service providers who chose to opt out of Canadian markets rather than pay the high costs and enter into the red tape.

As parliamentarians, we need to know exactly how this bill will be applied before it is enacted. The regulatory decisions should not be left up to the CRTC.

I want to raise another point that is related to this topic and one that many Canadians are greatly disturbed by. Last year, MPs of all parties were horrified to learn of the abuse being facilitated by MindGeek, which has a corporate presence right here in Canada. We were encouraged to see members of Parliament from all parties, including many of our colleagues across the aisle, question why a company should make billions off of broadcasting the abuse of others. However, here we are now, talking about making the Internet safer and more friendly for Canadians and better for children and our focus is on whether someone is generating revenue from TikTok and how the CRTC can make them pay into the system.

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Is this bill all about money, controlling what Canadians think and manufacturing groupthink? Where is the decisive action to address the broadcasting of sexual violence? Where is the urgency to protect vulnerable girls, women, boys and men in society? If we are talking about making the Internet safer for our kids, maybe worry a little less about what Netflix is airing and more about why a giant company has been profiting from broadcasting sex-trafficked girls. What is the priority of this bill? Should we not be more worried about our children's access to sexual violence instead of worrying about whether the content is made in Canada?

In closing, in many ways this bill is an attack on free speech. It is an attempt to control what Canadians say and watch online, and it shows that the government has its priorities all wrong.

I would call upon my colleagues to rethink this bill and to work together to truly make Canada a safer and freer country.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question to the member is with respect to the importance of Canadian culture and why it is that the Conservative Party has made the determination that it is not worthwhile for us to protect, encourage, promote and provide additional support for our arts community from coast to coast, which is, from my perspective and, I believe, the vast majority of Canadians' perspective, a positive thing. It is not only important to recognize it but there is also a need to protect it.

Does the member or the Conservative Party not recognize the need to protect our culture and heritage and arts industries?

• (1645)

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Madam Speaker, absolutely, Canadian content is very important. The problem is that this bill cannot define what Canadian content is. We have Canadian producers who would not be considered in the category of Canadian content. Until this bill can properly define Canadian content, it is hard to say that the Liberals are attempting to protect it, because they have not defined it.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question about algorithms.

The department has already said that it wants to focus on results in terms of discoverability and not intervene directly in algorithms. I am just wondering, though, how do we get the results we want without going through the algorithms, which play a fairly significant role nowadays in these kinds of platforms and social networks? Should this not be added to the bill?

[English]

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Madam Speaker, we are actually using algorithms currently. What this bill proposes is that they will choose which content and which speech Canadians must view. In the current system, the algorithms are driven by an individual's choice of what they want. What this bill proposes is to usurp that choice and should impose the government's choice upon the people, and that is what we are opposing.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for their passionate speech and for putting forward some of the issues present to that member. One area in particular, given the COVID-19 pandemic, is that artists have been hit hard, not only in my district of Edmonton Griesbach but across the country. This legislation would find ways to ensure that small content creators actually get the surplus in funding they need. In my riding, there is a community organization called Arts on the Ave. It is suffering right now, and it needs this bill to show that Canadian content matters.

Would the member comment on supporting small businesses, particularly arts businesses, in Canada?

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Madam Speaker, yes, support for small businesses is very important. That is why I would encourage small business funds to be created to assist in that capacity. However, to limit Canadians' choices and what they can see, and for our government to dictate and pick winners and losers, is not the Canadian way.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, is the hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk aware that the bill consistently says that it is within the meaning of the protections of freedom of expression and the charter, both in the original Broadcasting Act and in these amendments?

I do not see, though I am very suspicious of the government, any way that the government is trying to control what we think or say under Bill C-11.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Madam Speaker, I would vehemently disagree with the hon. member. In fact, the proposition is that the government will use algorithms, pick winners and losers and decide which content should show up above others. This would create a lot of problems, especially in smaller rural communities and ethnic communities. Many communities actually get their Canadian content from outside Canada, from producers who are producing content outside Canada. This content would not be included in this bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as a number of members have chosen to do, I also want to start my comments by reflecting on what is happening in Europe today.

The constituents I represent, and their heritage and families, are one of the reasons Winnipeg North has such great diversity. From beautiful cathedrals to communities and from industrial areas to commercial developments in Winnipeg's north end, the contributions in general that the 1.3 million people of Ukrainian heritage have made to our country are immeasurable.

Government Orders

What is taking place in Ukraine today strikes into the hearts of over 1.3 million people of Ukrainian heritage and millions of others. As I stood in my place previously, I indicated to the people of Ukraine and the Ukrainian community worldwide that Canada is a friend that will continue to be there in every way possible.

I appreciate the patience of members in allowing me to say that at the beginning of my comments.

In regard to Bill C-11, a lot of thoughts came through my mind as I listened to the opposition members talk about the bill. I cannot help but think about what my colleague from Kingston and the Islands was saying we could anticipate. It is almost as if he was prophesying. Already, just a couple of hours into it, we are starting to see it come true. I did not think it would be as extreme as I have seen it. In fact, I actually made a couple of quick notes on some of the things we heard from the last two Conservative speakers.

We heard that the government would tell us what to watch. These are the types of lines they were saying. According to some members of the Conservative Party, there is absolutely no need for oversight. We heard that Bill C-11 would enable censorship, that the government wants to start censoring what Canadians are watching and that members need to vote against it to protect Canadians from the government. We heard that it would be Communist-type policy if the legislation were to pass.

These were the types of things I made note of as I was listening to Conservative members. In fairness, I suspect that they were getting those speaking points from the Conservative backroom. If we go behind the curtains, behind the doors there, we will find some speaking notes. That is the Conservative spin.

Really, let us think about it. At the end of the day, what we are really talking about is modernizing the Broadcasting Act. The last time it was done in any substantial way was in 1991. I was a parliamentarian back in 1991. In fact, I can recall when I first bought a computer to use in my parliamentary capacity back in 1988, it was a Compaq and it had a 5.5" floppy disk. Imagine being in the Manitoba legislature building and wanting to get access to the Internet. First the computer had to be hooked up to a phone line, and the first noise heard was the dial tone kicking in, then a number going out. If we want to talk about speed, computers back then were really slow.

The Broadcasting Act was last changed in 1991. Just imagine what we have seen evolve in technology and in the advancements in computers since then. One has to wonder what world the Conservative Party of Canada is living in. The Conservative members' minds must still be on the protests. Where did they come up with the idea that the legislation is some sort of government conspiracy that has offended the extreme right into believing that the Government of Canada is going to be watching what they are doing on the Internet so that we can feed in our government agenda? Do they really believe that?

● (1650)

It has been three speakers already, and these are the types of conspiracies that they are talking about. It is completely irresponsible to try to give false information to Canadians when we are debating such an important matter.

The essence of the legislation is actually fairly straightforward and fairly simple. It is recognizing the fact that 1991 was the last time we had any significant change to the Broadcasting Act, and we are modernizing it. In other words, we are taking into particular consideration everything that has been happening with respect to the Internet. There have been massive changes, and I would like to get into a few of those.

However, before I do that, I want to encourage members of the official opposition. Although they have an interim leader, they are starting to veer fairly hard to the right, and I do not say that lightly. When we listen to their comments, we have to wonder who they are trying to appeal to. I believe that the legislation being brought forward is in general fairly well supported by industry, other stakeholders and our constituents, but instead of trying to state the facts about the legislation, the Conservatives are digging deep so that they can send out these weird emails in order to give misinformation and try to raise money. I would suggest that this is a huge disservice to the House. There is no conspiracy on this side of the House. All the Government of Canada is trying to do is modernize the Broadcasting Act by recognizing that the Internet matters and that it has really changed the lives of Canadians.

What types of things would this bill actually do?

Well, if we go back to the sixties, seventies and eighties, most people understood the importance of television and watched it considerably. Given our proximity to the United States, they recognized that there was a need to ensure that Canadian content would be there and that we would be investing in Canadian content and supporting that industry. Today, if we look around Canada, we will find in all regions of our country, no matter how remote, examples of our heritage and the arts programs that are there. We can see it in our schools, and I would suggest that all schools, either directly or indirectly, provide some form of heritage and arts programming.

When we talk about who we are as a people, it is important to recognize the francophone language, indigenous people and the very multicultural fabric of our society and how it has evolved. We have some amazingly talented people, and I often make reference, for example, to the Folklorama in the city of Winnipeg. Every summer for two weeks, we get pavilions from all around the world. It is made up primarily of local talent from the city of Winnipeg, but it goes beyond that to include rural Manitoba. Although we often get guests from outside of Canada, it is primarily local talent.

● (1655)

Many of those local talents are dependent on cultural funding, and they ultimately hope to maybe be on a TV sitcom or become a professional singer. That is why we brought in Canada's Broadcasting Act many years ago. Back then, we saw the value of it.

Today, we still see debate from the Conservative Party regarding CBC. One of things CBC was charged with was ensuring that Canadian content was there, real and tangible, and that it was moved forward and promoted. The programs it brought go far beyond *Hockey Night in Canada*. At the end of the day, we still get some Conservatives who want to see the demise of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Government Orders

At the end of the day, I can appreciate that we have seen the Broadcasting Act's impact on ensuring we have developed a healthy arts community in Canada. It is a significant impact. I do not know offhand the number of millions of dollars. What I do know is that we have a powerful Quebec caucus that often talks about the importance of the cultural and arts community in the province of Quebec. I know it is there, and that it is healthy and strong, because of the many comments I have heard from my colleagues.

In the province of Ontario a couple of weeks back, I was watching a show I think was called *Kim's Convenience*. It was nice to see, watching that TV program, that it is set in Toronto, a city that I like a great deal. *Corner Gas* is set in Saskatchewan, and I know there is an immense amount of pride from the people living in Saskatchewan. It is almost as much as the Rider pride for the Saskatchewan Roughriders.

Those are all a part of our arts industry. When we think about these programs, it is not just the actors and actresses who are being employed. We are talking about an industry. When I am in downtown Winnipeg and I see these huge semis and a house being lit up or a block being lit up, I know there is a production taking place. I have been inside the Manitoba legislature, and when the legislature is out, the movie cameras will come in. They are not coming in because of the politicians. They are coming in to reflect and hopefully produce a hit, so people around the world will have the opportunity to see some of the structures in the province of Manitoba.

It takes people to make those productions possible. I know the Province of British Columbia has set up a huge industry, but it does not matter which province or territory we look at. We will find an industry there and it is an industry that people want to see grow, because, as an industry, it provides a lot of jobs and helps us identify who we are as a nation. We are different than the United States.

This is not legislation about freedom. Members could listen to the speeches from the Conservative Party and think this is all about freedom of speech, but nothing could be further from the truth. There is not one Liberal member of Parliament who does not believe in the importance of freedom of speech. In fact, it was the Liberal Party that brought in the Charter of Rights, which guarantees freedom of speech and individual rights, and we are very proud of that fact.

• (1700)

We are the party that created the Charter of Rights. When the Conservatives talk about freedom of speech, they are really trying to justify voting no to this legislation. There is really no reason for the Conservative Party to vote no. I have listened to them. There are those who stay away from the freedom of speech argument, and there has been no real articulation as to why this is bad legislation or why, at the very least, it could not go to committee.

If we were to ask each and every one of them, I would like to think that most recognize that, yes, Canada does have an arts community and that is a good thing. I would think the majority believe that. I would think a majority of Conservatives at least believe there is a difference between the Internet today and that back in 1991. At the end of the day, when legislation passes here at second reading,

it goes to the committee stage. If there are some concerns, which I too have, there would be an opportunity to go over those concerns.

With regard to commercial social media and what it means, I am very much interested in what the CRTC has to say. The Minister of Canadian Heritage made it clear that he would like the CRTC to provide a better and clearer definition from its perspective as to what commercial social media would look like. There are some legitimate concerns.

I am not saying it is absolutely perfect. If there are ways to improve the legislation, given the response from the department and the minister, the government is open to ideas and thoughts to do that. However, if the only real argument as to why members will vote no is strictly about freedom, I really think this has more to do with the Conservative far right behaviour that we have witnessed in the last three weeks.

One would think Conservatives have all taken out memberships to support the Trump re-election campaign or something. It is amazing that the Conservative Party of Canada, at the national level, feels it has to use the word "freedom" in order to justify voting against this legislation.

Then they criticize the NDP for agreeing to send this bill to committee. Go figure. They say it is a coalition. Without the support of other opposition parties, we would not have passed Bill C-2 or Bill C-8, which were supports and relief for Canadians during the pandemic with lockdowns and purchasing masks. The Conservatives voted against that too.

They vote against everything and then tie in the word "freedom". They need to regroup. How far right are they going to go? It is a resurgence of the Reform Party. That is what we are starting to see. It is being routed from a certain area and a certain number, and all Canadians should be concerned about that.

Members should not worry about freedom. The legislation is good. They should do the right thing, support their constituents and vote for this legislation.

• (1705)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for giving the calibre of speech that members of the House have come to expect from him, with many trumped-up comments. As a Conservative, I am not at all ashamed or embarrassed about the fact that our party champions freedom, freedom of speech and the freedom of individuals to make their own choices.

Government Orders

I want to ask the member a specific question about misinformation. We have heard a lot in this House today about RT and the problems with it, and I share those concerns. However, I have similar concerns about state-backed misinformation coming from news channels that are controlled by the Chinese Communist Party. We should not forget that the issue of state-backed misinformation, even of torture and forced confession happening on air, is not just an issue coming out of Russia. It is also an issue in China. Should we not be dealing with that as well?

• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we have the CRTC, which has done Canada quite well over the years. At times, we might have some concerns in regard to it. It is apolitical. It is there to ensure that industries and Canadians as a whole are represented well. There is a sense of accountability to ensure that we continue to have confidence in the CRTC and the types of things it is doing.

Just to conclude the thought I had about the word “freedom”, I would emphasize that the Liberal Party, the Government of Canada, understands and appreciates the word freedom. After all, we are the ones who brought in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Liberal Party and the Bloc Québécois agree on one thing, and that does not happen often. The thing we agree on is the presence of Quebec and Canadian content on platforms.

If this is what matters, why exclude algorithms from the methods to ultimately achieve the same result?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I personally have a bit of a problem with that. I suspect that it would be one of the issues that would be brought up at the committee stage. I am glad to hear that the Bloc supports Bill C-11. It sounds like its members will be voting in favour of its going to committee. I see that as a positive thing.

It is time that we look at the companies such as Netflix, Crave and Spotify and recognize that we need to level the playing field. That is what this legislation is attempting to do. I believe that we will be successful at doing it if we can get it passed through the House.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech attentively. I did enjoy his reference to the struggles of connecting to the Internet in the 1990s. I am thankful that my children will not know the struggle of connecting through a 28k modem and the horrible screeching sound that it made.

The member for Winnipeg North and I both served in the 42nd Parliament. At that time, the issue of web giants and their unfair competitive advantage was brought up a number of times. Why did the Liberal government wait until now? Why did it not take advantage of the majority government that it had, to pass legislation to tackle this issue? Does his government have an estimate as to how many workers in our cultural industries were negatively impacted by that delay?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, after 10 years of a Conservative government, with our coming into government, there were a number of legislative initiatives that were brought forward. This is the first major overhaul of the Canada Broadcasting Act and it had to go through a process of consultation. We do need to recognize the fine work that the departmental officials have done.

The most important thing is that we finally have the legislation here. We are in a position because we are at the beginning of our mandate. Who knows? Maybe, with the right support, we can continue on for the next three years. We have the time now. Let us see if we can pass the legislation and amend legislation that is long overdue, as I know would be very supportive to our industries.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the crux of this legislation is that streaming platforms have access to our market in Canada, but do not have any responsibility to pay for our content creators, our artists and our performers, and this act is there to help with our performers. I have heard Conservatives across the way saying that this is the government reaching in, when really it is the government giving tools to the CRTC to be able to support our industries.

Could the member talk about how the governance actually works between the Government of Canada, the CRTC and the market?

• (1715)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is a really important question. We need to recognize that by passing the legislation, we are giving the CRTC, which is politically independent of the House, the power to ensure that there is a level playing field. As an example, for Netflix there is going to be the obligation to contribute to Canadian content and funding. Canadian content and funding have always been obligations for television networks. We are leveling the playing field so that both sides have to be able to contribute to something important to all Canadians.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, a lot has been said today about web giants. I think the member said that the Internet matters, and I agree.

The concern I have with the member for Winnipeg North is when he is talking about introducing new rules on the Internet. I am worried that he has broken previous rules. He used one of those web giants to break the Elections Act by advertising to more than 35,000 of his constituents on election day, against the Elections Act, by using a web giant. The member spent over \$10,000 on advertising on Facebook, and used one of those web giants.

If the member has broken the elections law before by using one of the web giants, will he commit today to following this law if it gets passed?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I have addressed that issue in the past.

Government Orders

What is important is to recognize that at the end of the day, Netflix, Spotify, Crave and YouTube are the types of platforms that Canadians expect and want the government to ensure have a level playing field. That, in essence, protects our arts and cultural communities. It is an investment. It is the right thing to do, and I only wish the Conservatives would get on board.

If the member wanted to give me leave after I am done on the bill, I would be more than happy to talk in great detail about an incident that Conservatives and others, I believe, might have even been involved in, too.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, certainly I am pleased with Bill C-11 so far, but there are things that trouble me within it, for instance what happened in amendments to Bill C-10, in the last Parliament, to Canadian ownership of our Canadian broadcasting. That seems to be a little bit more wobbly. There is a lack of clear support for smaller producers and smaller creators, but there is this other piece of work that we need to do on broadcasting, and that is what I will ask my question about.

When will we see the government provide a comprehensive framework legislation and funding to get the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation back to what it should be doing? Ever since it put *Wheel of Fortune* on air and competed with private broadcasters, I have felt that the CBC, as it should be, was slipping between our fingers.

When we talk of this country not being unified, I think of Peter Gzowski, who has passed away. He and *Morningside* used to hold us together in the same way that watching the news with Knowlton Nash held us together. Something has gone wrong with the CBC. I am a big fan, but I feel as though competing with private broadcasters has not been the way to go, and we need to get back to a CBC that is more like the BBC.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member raises two issues. The first one is something that I think might be appropriate to discuss at the committee level to address her specifics. I know she is very thorough in terms of reading bills and their details and she does a lot of research. I do not want to give her any sort of misinformation, but I suggest that she raise it with the Minister of Canadian Heritage who is very open-minded on it.

In regard to the CBC, I am a big fan of the CBC. At the end of the day, I think CBC Radio, in particular, has done so much in terms of not only holding our country together, but it is listened to worldwide. Through the decades, it has had a very positive impact on Canadian identity.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to rise and give my voice to this debate today. I want to note off the top that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood, a long-time member here. I have served with him for as long as I have been elected, and I want to thank him for all the work that he does.

Today, I will be speaking to Bill C-11, and I want to bring to the attention of the House an article that I found online by Ramneet Bhullar. It neatly sums up the concerns that we have with the bill. The government has a new minister. It got rid of jumpsuit Steven and has a new minister on it, but it does not make the bill any bet-

ter. The bill has the same problems that we have seen in the past, and we are hoping that the government would improve upon the bill rather than just bring back the same old bill.

The one dramatic improvement we see in the bill is that user-generated content is excluded. That is a dramatic improvement from the bill that came out of the last Parliament, only because that part of the bill was taken out of the bill at committee. That was something that was put in. It was something that was helpful in getting support for the bill, but there was no ability for—

• (1720)

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I think we all work hard and we come here to represent our constituents. I just want to make sure I did hear what I thought I heard. I think the comment the member just made was absolutely inappropriate. He likes the fact that it slid by and nobody else noticed. I would ask that he apologize and retract it from the record. It was entirely inappropriate, and it does not belong in the chamber.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Yes, they are terms that are extremely demeaning for other members of the House, and it would be appropriate if the hon. member apologized for calling a minister of the Crown names.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, to continue on with my speech, the online streaming bill, Bill C-11—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is the hon. member apologizing for the comment? That was the purpose of the point of order and my comments.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I did note that there was a new minister on this particular bill and I am—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the member named the minister in a derogatory form that was based on the way that he did it. You have now identified that it is inappropriate. The only course of action for him at this point is not to try to justify it but to actually apologize and withdraw the comments. Otherwise, we have to look to the House for how we deal with this situation.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I do recommend that the hon. member apologize, not only because the comment was derogatory but also for naming the hon. member.

I recommend highly that the hon. member apologize.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I apologize for doing what I did indirectly that I am not allowed to do directly. I am sorry about that.

This bill continues to be an assault on freedom. There is no doubt about that.

I gave a speech on Bill C-10 in the last Parliament, and the bill made significant reference to the fact that there was going to be algorithmic transparency. That is something I was in favour of. Algorithmic transparency is something we definitely want to see.

Government Orders

The challenge with that concept, which comes out of this bill, is not so much that algorithms will be transparent but that the government will be able to dictate the outcome of these algorithms. That is the challenge we see.

This particular bill, Bill C-11, is again bringing the government into these spaces. We hear, over and over again, from the Liberals that they want to level the playing field.

I have a significant story about folks in my riding who would like to start a radio station. It is very easy to start a podcast in this country. There are a number of hosting services available. People are able to use Facebook Live if they want to. There are a number of ways to start a podcast, and in probably an hour someone can have their own podcast.

On the other hand, to get a TV or a radio station started in this country is difficult, particularly in a part of the world like the one I come from, which is vast and large and where there are no other radio stations. There is only a handful of people living in northern Alberta, where there is one radio station, which is the CBC. If other folks come along and would like to start their own radio station, the amount of time and energy they would need to spend to try to start a radio station in northern Alberta would be significant. We have seen this over and over again.

I am glad to hear that the Liberals want to level the playing field, so to speak. When it comes to starting a radio station in a small town in northern Alberta, folks have worked on it for literally a year. They have spent a year trying to get approvals for a radio station in northern Alberta. They could get a podcast up and running immediately.

I point out that the Internet in rural Alberta is somewhat spotty. It is probably better than in most other parts of the country, given the fact that we have the oil patch everywhere and it brings the Internet everywhere, but besides that it is still not the same as it is downtown, so the Internet is not readily available. If someone starts a podcast in northern Alberta, they may have some trouble with the Internet.

To start a radio station, something that could be broadcast to an entire community with local news and that sort of thing, the amount of paperwork and effort someone has to go through to start that radio station is immense, never mind the cost of doing that. Setting up the facilities just to broadcast is probably \$20,000.

With a bill like this, the government could be trying to level the playing field and make it easier for Canadian content generators to get their content on the airways so their local communities could hear it, but it is not doing that. Instead, what the government is trying to do is pick winners and losers, which is something Conservatives have been saying all along.

The freedom of being Canadian is that people can take their message to the public square regardless of what the government has to say about it. The thresholds for starting a radio station are immense in this country, and the government is entirely responsible for that.

I am not saying the government should get out of that. In the radio space, I believe there is specifically a role for the government. We cannot have the folks with the most powerful radio kicking ev-

erybody else out of the radio waves. That would not be appropriate. We would just end up with a war.

In northern Alberta, where there are two radio stations in a small town, certainly we should be able to organize and tell one station that it gets 98.1 and the other that it gets 93.7. As long as they are not interfering with anybody else and there is not another radio station for another 300 kilometres, I do not see what the big deal is and why there are all the regulatory processes. It should be that they can start their radio stations, get rolling and not mess with the other folks.

• (1725)

I understand that, when we get into Toronto, for example, where there might be hundreds of radio stations all competing within one or two notches on the dial, it is going to get a bit more confusing and it is going to take more to manage that. That is the role of the government. The role of the government is to manage the differences between those radio stations.

Rather than trying to make the Internet services operate and be regulated as if they are radio stations, how about working the other way and make it much easier for the radio stations to operate so someone can start a radio station as easy as starting up a podcast in this country? That would be levelling the playing field, in my opinion. That would be trying to ensure that no matter the method of bringing one's voice to the public square, they are able to do that regardless of which mode they are using. That would be fantastic if we could level that playing field. I think that is entirely within the CRTC's wheelhouse.

Instead, we see it going the other way. We see more radio and TV legacy media struggling to compete with the new platforms and instead of the government taking the shackles off, reducing red tape and making it easier for them to compete, the government is going to put more red tape and more regulations on the Internet. Then they will take money from the Internet and transfer that wealth from Internet service providers back to the legacy media. That is where I really think this bill falls flat on its face.

This whole question of Canadian content becomes a really interesting debate. For example, there are several podcasts and folks I listen to. One of them is called Viva Frei. It is by a YouTube sensation out of Montreal. He is a good Canadian guy. He has his own YouTube channel. He is a lawyer by trade and he explains the law and how the law works here in Canada. He is generally at odds with what the Liberals are up to. Are the Liberals going to be disputing whether he has Canadian content? Would they be concerned about who is contributing to his online following? That is exactly the kind of thing we are talking about.

Another one I follow is Redneck's Québec. It is another one I am really excited about. His antics on the snowmobile are impressive. Larry Enticer is another one I think is great, along with Rut Daniels. These are all great Canadians who have their own following on the Internet, and it is, in my opinion, definitely Canadian content. However, how and where are these decisions going to be made? Will these folks, whom I really appreciate on the Internet, be given the benefits of this new regime being brought in by Bill C-11?

Government Orders

I hope I have been able to explain the two issues around this bill, which are who defines what Canadian content is and also the leveling of the playing field. We do not have to bring the streaming services up to the same amount as the radio stations, but rather bring the radio stations down so they can compete with the streaming services.

• (1730)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am going to be honest. I had a really difficult time following that logic around making it easier to get on the radio. I imagine what makes it difficult to get on the radio is purchasing all of the equipment, including the antennas. Yes, I am aware that the CRTC has a lengthy application and the amount of work to fill it out. The real thing that would make it hard to get on the radio, I imagine, would be all the equipment that one needs for radio that they do not need to get on YouTube or whatnot.

Nonetheless, on this point of algorithms and the government setting up, I think it is important to point out to many Conservative members that the legislation specifically says, “The Commission shall not make an order under paragraph (1)(e) that would require the use of a specific computer algorithm or source code.” It is clear from the legislation that there cannot be government control over the algorithm, despite the fact that this member would suggest otherwise.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I would say that it takes about \$20,000, in terms of equipment, to get set up. Yes, it is a hundred per cent much more difficult to get on the radio. However, the equipment is readily available. If someone has the \$20,000, they can have the equipment up and running overnight. However, what someone cannot get is the licence to start broadcasting overnight. That takes several months, several review boards and all these things. There is a significant case in northern Alberta where I am dealing with the CRTC and we are unable to get a radio station in northern Alberta where there is only one other radio station servicing the entire community.

As for the algorithms, Ms. Ramneet Bhullar, in her article, talks about the algorithm manipulation. She says this is an odd fix because, rather than stating that the government cannot manipulate the algorithm, they can demand an outcome, which is essentially manipulating it.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I feel somewhat like my colleague opposite, who said that he did not really understand our colleague's position. I gather that my colleague is afraid that algorithms will be altered by the legislation. However, the bill states the exact opposite.

Clause 4.1 of the former Bill C-10 led to a major impasse in the last Parliament and unfortunately compromised its passage. The current bill specifies that social media creators, users and influencers will be exempt from the application of the act. On what basis is our colleague attempting to discredit this new bill, when it has been corrected—

• (1735)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I must give the hon. member the opportunity to respond.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, just again on that point around algorithmic transparency and the manipulation of algorithms, the bill specifically says that the government cannot regulate the algorithms, but what happens in practice is that the regulations for Canadian content will effectively manipulate the algorithm. If the government can say a certain percentage of one's content must be Canadian content and it must show up in one's feed, then that is essentially manipulating the algorithm. That is precisely what Ms. Ramneet Bhullar said in her article.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, on the topic of manipulated algorithms, I would tend to agree. One would only have to reference all the fake participants and followers among the Conservative leadership candidates. When talking about algorithmic manipulation, look at what just happened in the occupation.

Would the hon. member agree that big corporations, such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and the like, have a disproportionate impact on our discourse and would he agree that they need to be perhaps broken up, as well as some of the big conglomerated mainstream media outlets that we have like National Post and others?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, yes.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am once again honoured to have the opportunity in this place to speak to the matters contained within Bill C-11, the online streaming act, the new name. I say “again” because, as many will remember, in the previous Parliament we tackled these issues under a different bill, and it was called Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act.

This is a new bill and a new title, but we still have the same issues that exist with this bill. It was interesting because, moments ago in committee, the heritage minister admitted that Bill C-10 was flawed. He said that proposed section 2.1 should never have been in there, and 4.1. He mentioned those two that we fought on this side, in Bill C-10, for weeks. Unfortunately, even with the flawed bill, it passed the House but then the Liberals called the unnecessary election and the bill died.

However, this is the first time the Minister of Canadian Heritage has actually admitted Bill C-10 was a flawed bill. Here we go now with Bill C-11, an update. We all know the update is necessary. It has been 30-plus years since we updated the Broadcasting Act. I was even a young broadcaster 30-plus years ago when this came out. At that time, believe it or not, there was no Internet. It was just radio and TV back then, a little bit of newspaper. Of course, the Internet came and the World Wide Web, as we know it today, has changed a lot.

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There were no Internet companies and no online streaming services to compete with the healthy Canadian broadcasters. However, when the predecessor of this bill was drafted in Parliament last session, we addressed four major areas of concern where the government legislation lacked significant consideration. I mentioned a couple of those in proposed sections 2.1 and 4.1, but we will go on.

First was for social media companies we all know, such as Facebook, Google and their various properties like YouTube, to pay their fair share. We agree. Second was creating that level playing field for digital platforms, like Netflix and Spotify, to compete with the conventional Canadian broadcasters. Third was to define Canadian content. This is the important one. We need to define Canadian content production and media fund contributions by digital broadcasters. What is the formula?

Last was the power given to the CRTC, better known as the Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission, to attempt to regulate in such a broad manner. This is an organization that struggles to enforce its own regulations now. We can even look, today, at Russia Today. They really never did take it down. It was the big conglomerates that moved in and took Russia Today down, like Bell, Rogers and Shaw. It is interesting. I think we could all agree the CRTC should have moved long before Russia Today was pulled down from Canadian programming.

Forty years ago, Internet companies and streaming were not even a consideration. Digital information has become absolutely accessible to everyone in this country. The demand for mainstream media, television and radio has nosedived. Streaming services have become the primary source of entertainment for many Canadians. Television stations have had to downsize their operations, along with radio stations. Many have gone dark in this country. The same is true for radio.

Right now, radio stations have another issue. Their revenues have dropped as much as 40%. Part of the problem is the public broadcaster, CBC. The government gave it another \$150 million more during COVID to compete against private broadcasters. As I just said, private broadcasters' revenues have gone down 40%. CBC has gone up \$150 million more in the budget, meaning we can see what is happening in the market. CBC, the public broadcaster, is going up, while the private broadcasters' radio listeners are going down, and thus advertising is not as good.

● (1740)

The result, as in my province of Saskatchewan, is that we have seen a major decline in local content. Easy access to digital content has been beneficial to the consumer, but with the outdated Broadcasting Act, the broadcasting sector has had some steep hurdles to overcome, and I mentioned those just seconds ago.

It is therefore fair to ask this: What does a modernized act need to accomplish? Does the government's latest attempt, Bill C-11, actually achieve this goal?

The first concern we should all address is the notion that the Internet needs to be regulated. We need clarity and clearly defined parameters on which aspects of the Internet would be regulated and to what extent. Would Bill C-11 create an environment where virtually all of the content would be regulated, including independent con-

tent creators earning just a modest living from social media platforms such as YouTube?

As I mentioned, Bill C-11 is almost a copy of the previous Liberal offering, Bill C-10, which was flawed and failed to address many of the concerns addressed by the experts during its hearings. When we speak of creating a level playing field, is it in the context of giving Canadian content creators the protection they need to produce and compete without impeding their ability to succeed at home and globally? Regulation, done properly, would support the success of Canadian content producers and would meet the objectives of the Canadian heritage mandates to support artists and the cultural sector. However, the bill before us leaves very little hope that this is what would be achieved.

I remain very concerned about the CRTC being tasked with administering the act. I have been in the business of television and radio for over four decades, and I have seen that the CRTC is already stretched to its limits with the broadcasting and telecom situation in this country. If the CRTC lacks the capacity to carry out the current mandate effectively, how can it be expected to take on the Internet?

The CRTC struggles to cope with the 4,000 or 5,000 entities in the broadcasting sector. We are seeing it in the industry committee now. Rogers wants to take over Shaw, and although this started last year, we still have no definitive action from the CRTC. Will it make a ruling soon on the takeover worth \$26 billion? Can it even predict the number of entities that it will be required to look after once online streaming is added to its mandate? How much money and how much talent would the CRTC need on board to keep up with the bill? In fact, does it even understand the scope of the undertaking yet? How many years will it take to understand the criteria and scope and accumulate the resources needed to carry this out?

During our last debate on Bill C-10, I asked this of the CRTC chairman, Ian Scott, who, by the way, is stepping down in September after five years: How is the CRTC ever going to pay for this? He gleefully told the committee that it would be going directly to the Treasury Board. Well, we know what that means: The taxpayers will be paying more for their services.

What is perhaps most disappointing is that the CRTC will be handed the power to develop the rules of regulating, and it can make those rules up as it goes along. This act would endow the CRTC with the ability to determine its own jurisdiction without constraints.

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• (1745)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was very interested to hear the hon. member across the way, especially given his background in broadcasting. However, I did not hear what I was listening for in his speech. My question is about the support of our artists and creators, the people who bring the content to broadcasters, whether in radio or streaming services. There is a value gap. They are simply not paid for the value they create. The act would be put in place to address that and to bring support to our artists and creators.

Could the hon. member comment on how the act could improve the lives of artists and creators in Canada?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, the member for Guelph is so right. Much of our new-found talent came from YouTube and progressed from there. Many do not deserve to be on YouTube, quite frankly, as their careers will never lift off, but it is a way to try to get started. As we move forward on Bill C-11, the discussion will be what to do with the Internet, YouTube and so on, because many performers in this country are making a pretty good living right now putting their talent on YouTube instead of on the traditional media that we know today of radio and TV.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Saskatoon—Grasswood on his speech. I have the pleasure of sitting with this colleague on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. We certainly do not always have the same views on all issues, but we certainly have the same passion for media and culture.

He was involved in the discussions about Bill C-10 on broadcasting in the previous Parliament, and with Bill C-11, we have a bill that is not far removed from what we had before.

Does my colleague look favourably on the upcoming work in committee? Does he intend to work constructively to develop, improve and pass Bill C-11 on broadcasting, which, as everyone knows, is eagerly awaited by the industry?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, the member for Drummond is a valuable member on the Canadian heritage committee, and he has been on it for years. We worship his input and always have interesting conversations.

He is a member from the province of Quebec, and one of the issues with Bill C-10 was protecting Quebec culture. We did not see eye to eye on that. Netflix is not going to shoot a show or production in Montreal because it has a limited segment of the population. It would rather do it in English because there is a larger audience.

We will go forward with Bill C-11. The member was in the same committee I was, and changes were made to proposed subsection 2(2.1) and proposed section 4.1 between the old bill and the new bill. Maybe it is time for this bill to pass with those two new changes. We will see.

• (1750)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Qujannamiik, Uqaqtittiji.* The Conservatives have made it clear that they are good friends

with our American neighbours and have referenced the importance of Canadian content as well. Does the member agree that Canadian content, such as “the medium is the message”, is a value to be protected, or is this more about allowing American sensationalism, such as “make America great again”, instead?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Nunavut. I was in Nunavut four years ago for a two-week tour with Senator Dennis Patterson and enjoyed it immensely.

The member would know that APTN was formed in this country because voices were not being heard. That is right. The public broadcaster, CBC, did not do a good enough job of broadcasting the voices of Canadians. What had to happen? APTN television, out of Winnipeg, was formed. Why? It was to give a voice to Canadians. I hope that voices in Nunavut will be heard correctly as we move along on Bill C-11.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, as an aside, I would first like to point out to the House that, like many of my colleagues, I am wearing the colours of Ukraine today.

I was in Montreal yesterday, along with several of my Bloc Québécois colleagues, to take part in the rally in support of Ukraine. A number of rallies were held across Canada and Quebec. I saw yesterday why the people of Ukraine will emerge victorious from this conflict. Whatever the outcome of this Russian assault, the people of Ukraine have embarked on a path that will inevitably lead them to achieve their goals. When a people or a nation decides to live freely and to live in a democracy, the path to get there does not stop until the ultimate goal has been reached.

Quebeckers are worried about loved ones who are currently stuck in Ukraine. One of my constituents in Drummond, Mr. Nelson, comes to mind. His wife is sheltering in the basement of the school where she teaches in Nizhyn. He has not heard from her, although perhaps it is for some silly reason, like she cannot charge her phone or has no way to reach him. I want Mr. Nelson to know that the Bloc Québécois and his representative will never give up.

This long preamble on the situation in Ukraine is somewhat related to what we are debating today. War in the digital era plays out at different levels than it did a few decades ago, or even one decade ago. These days public opinion is infinitely easier to manipulate. We have seen it many times and examples have been pouring in for a few years now. It is a threat that we must confront urgently.

An example of this came up just today. My colleague from Saskatoon—Grasswood mentioned it. This afternoon, the Minister of Canadian Heritage was at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and we talked about the Russian propaganda media, Russia Today, which has been banned from several Canadian cable companies. I am not saying that muzzling or censorship is the solution. I want to make it clear that this is an exceptional measure.

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The solution is not always to silence the voices of people with different opinions, and I pointed this out to the minister earlier. I told him that this was warranted in the case of Russia Today, which is broadcasting disinformation and propaganda from the Russian regime to justify Russia's despicable attack on Ukraine, but I said that this instance must not create a precedent for censoring or silencing other press or media outlets that might broadcast questionable content that we do not agree with or condone.

This is why a bill on the Broadcasting Act that takes today's reality into account is so important. As members know, the current legislation was passed in 1991. I think we explored the issue thoroughly during the debate on Bill C-10 last year. This old and outdated legislation is long overdue for revitalization and modernization. I am very pleased to finally rise to speak to the long-awaited Bill C-11, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act, which will also address online streaming.

It is rather sobering to see that, 16 months after a bill that was urgently awaited by the cultural industry, broadcasters and the media was first introduced, we are essentially back to square one. I say "essentially" because some improvements were made to Bill C-11. These improvements were obviously the result of the numerous amendments proposed when the bill was studied in committee last year. I also want to point out that many of these improvements were championed by my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, in particular the improvement regarding the discoverability of Canadian and French-language content and content from different cultural communities, which add colour and beauty to our cultural universe.

• (1755)

Had Bill C-10 passed, the CRTC would now be holding hearings to regulate the industry with a view to creating a more level playing field for all actors in cultural sectors and broadcasting.

Had Bill C-10 passed, we would be starting to see our content creators, programming undertakings and artists getting back to creating television shows, movies and music because they would have renewed confidence in the government's ability to create an environment where their content will do more than just make Chinese and American billionaires richer.

These people are not asking for a pandemic relief program. They are asking to create, sing, dance, produce shows, play, produce and earn an honest living through their passions.

We have lost many people and a great deal of expertise in the cultural and radio and television sectors since the start of this pandemic. Many people have left for more stable and less stressful sectors because they are also mothers and fathers. We underestimate these people's contributions to society.

I will repeat it, because I get the impression that it takes time to sink in, that it is not immediately or quickly understood: Culture is not an expense. Culture is an investment. Culture pays off. Culture contributes to the Quebec and Canadian economy. Artists and cultural workers are not a bunch of lazy old fogies who live off subsidies. Culture is an industry worth about \$60 billion per year. Culture is an industry that supports more than 600,000 people in Canada. It is wealth. It is not just wealth from a financial perspective, it is our wealth because it both reflects and conveys what and

who we are as a nation. Culture conveys to the whole world what our identity is, what our values are, what our personality is, what our colours are.

If the means of disseminating our culture are taken away, what will be left of us? The rest of the world will continue to think that Canadians play hockey, that they drink beer and Tim Hortons coffee, that Quebeckers wear arrowhead sashes while eating poutine around a campfire in winter. We will see the usual familiar clichés that all of us are a little tired of seeing around the world. That is what our television, our radio, our cinema allow us to convey. They allow us to showcase our stories, what and who we are.

We must ensure that our creators, producers and broadcasters can continue to do just that on the new platforms forced upon us by the new technologies on which we are becoming increasingly dependent.

We have heard a lot of criticism about the regulation of content. Sometimes the criticism is ideological, while other times it is more partisan. Sometimes it is well-founded, while other times it is less so. I think the criticism is relevant in the sense that everyone is entitled to their opinions. For instance, someone might not be a big fan of quotas for French-language content.

I started working in radio as a young host in the mid-1980s. Canadian music quotas and francophone music quotas were just starting to be imposed. I can say that it really got on my nerves, because it was not very cool, even though there was some great music there. There were some excellent artists, but the choice was still pretty limited at the time. There was not a huge pool of music for the different styles of radio, for example. The radio station I worked for was much more youth oriented. We definitely had a little less to choose from in those days.

I can admit quite honestly now that I used to find it annoying to have to comply with francophone music quotas. However, over time, I began noticing the positive impacts of that regulation, that push to promote francophone content on Quebec radio stations.

• (1800)

As time passed, more and more new bands and new musical genres came along and were discovered because of the regulations that were put in place to showcase our music and our artists. There were extraordinary positive impacts.

Today, there could be radio stations with 100% French-language programming and listeners would never get bored. They would not necessarily hear the same thing all the time, even if some radio programmers believe that the same songs should be replayed just about every hour. That is another matter and another debate.

The positive effects of implementing such regulations are tangible. If it worked for radio, if it works for traditional media, it is also going to work for digital media. We must do it for digital media for the same reasons that I mentioned earlier. We show the entire world who we truly are through our media, our art, our culture, our programs, our movies and our talent. We are more than just beer and coffee drinkers, more than just lovers of poutine wearing arrowhead sashes and gathering around a fire. Culture dispels clichés.

The need to quickly bring in new broadcasting regulations, to refresh the ones that have been in place since 1991, is even more urgent given the current crisis in the cultural industry, which has certainly been aggravated by the omnipresent digital media and digital corporations like GAFAM. These giants are gobbling up our news media's profits and their share of the advertising pie. It is time to regulate this.

I have some figures to share. Since the beginning of the pandemic, out of the 180,000 jobs lost, whether temporarily or permanently, more than 50,000 cultural sector workers, artists and content creators decided to throw in the towel and do something else. They went off to get another job. They have families to feed, and they cannot stay in a situation where they do not know when the next crisis will crop up or what impact it will have on them.

These people no longer want to go through that kind of stress. More than 50,000 people in Canada have decided to do something other than the work they loved above all else. One of these days, we will have to come back to this and think about how much importance we give to our artists and content creators. We might want to consider reviewing the Status of the Artist Act. I want that to happen soon. It will be important to do that, because these self-employed cultural workers lack even a modicum of financial security, as they are excluded from government programs by virtue of their status. That means we lose them in times of crisis, which is what we are seeing right now.

The Union des artistes, a Quebec-based artists' union, polled its members earlier this year, and the numbers are alarming: 61% reported having lost interest in their artistic trade, 35% had sought help for mental distress, and 15% had suicidal thoughts during this period. The Union des artistes has 13,000 members, so 15% is a lot of people to be having those thoughts.

Culture is important, but we also need to talk about broadcasters. Up until a few years ago, companies across Canada were operating in a system that they helped to build and that afforded them some protection from the invasion of powerful foreign consortia and major media outlets. This was, in large part, thanks to the legal requirement that this system be effectively owned and controlled by Canadians.

For decades, these companies helped develop Canadian and Quebec content, highlighting and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity. These companies spent and are still spending a lot of money to be able to operate and meet the licensing requirements. Many of these companies are key parts of our economy, in Quebec and across Canada. These companies still bear a massive burden just to be able to operate as broadcasters.

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What message are we sending these builders, these major employers, these broadcasters that have been required to contribute to helping artists and niche broadcasters thrive?

Niche broadcasters, which may have less influence, have had the opportunity to thrive and offer programming for cultural communities. ICI Télévision in Montreal is a wonderful little TV station that I think everyone should check out.

● (1805)

There is also APTN, which does such a good job of promoting the culture of our first nations and serves as an example for the entire world. People come here to learn from APTN's expertise and apply it in other countries. I think we can be proud of that, and it is thanks to our broadcasting system that we can have success stories like this one.

The message we are sending our broadcasters right now is that it is okay for the big sharks to swim in our little fishbowl, siphoning off the bulk of the advertising revenue without having to contribute significantly to the system. However, it is our broadcasters who must comply with burdensome, increasingly costly, counterproductive and decidedly unfair regulations as the industry transforms.

These days, there is a lot of talk about politicizing issues. It is true that a lot of politics is done on just about everything, and I think that is normal. We are in politics, so it is normal to politicize issues. Otherwise, I do not think we would be in the right place. However, I think there are issues that require us to rise above and look beyond ideology or filibustering. We need to be open and aware of the issues we are debating here.

Bill C-11 may not be perfect yet, but we will have the opportunity to work on it. I think this is a bill with a very good foundation, and it certainly does not deserve to be blocked the way Bill C-10 was last year.

I sincerely hope that all members and political parties in the House will see this bill as a necessity for our Canadian and Quebec broadcasters, but also for the entire cultural industry, for our artists, our content creators, our artisans and our self-employed workers in the cultural sector.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think the member across the way has nailed it. The value that our artists bring to us in what they do for our communities and their discoverability is something we should be paying for as we need artists to continue to create for us.

Could the hon. member comment on how the American streaming systems do not always find Canadian artists, such as we would find in Quebec or in the rest of Canada?

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[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, with respect to discoverability and unique Quebec or Canadian content, it is indeed our duty and responsibility to protect that content. Big American and foreign digital broadcasters do not care about that because they swim in a big ocean and can go everywhere. Things are going great for them.

In our case, however, we are distinct—if I may use that word—and we have to protect ourselves. To do that, we have to demand the visibility we are entitled to, at least on our own territory. That is why I think the discoverability piece is a crucial obligation we have to impose on these corporations.

• (1810)

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the most important points I heard was how important Canadian content is and how important it is that we do not see content that continues to perpetuate stereotypes, but really broadens the Canadian experience. With a lot of folks in the work I do, I have to bring their attention to our content creators. I know that web giants are using every loophole to get out of paying taxes in our country and making sure our Canadian content is boosted.

I am wondering if the member could talk about how important discoverability is and how this bill would address that issue and bring forward Canadian content producers, so that all of us can hear the wealth of Canadian stories.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I think my colleague raises an excellent point. There are cultural gems and treasures just waiting to be discovered in Quebec and all over Canada. We have to give opportunities to these small communities, to these unique and distinct cultural groups, to the entire spectrum that makes up this wonderful country and this wonderful nation of Quebec—until it becomes a wonderful country in its own right.

What I would say here is kind of like what I said to the other member just now. It is our duty to protect these treasures and give them their rightful place in our system. If these foreign players come play in our yard, it is up to us to make the rules of the game. Again, the content discoverability piece is absolutely crucial. It is essential to the survival of our culture and our identity, and it is the only way we can put an end to the awful stereotypes I talked about in my speech.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his eloquent speech on culture. That is something we do not hear often enough within these walls.

I also liked that he talked about freedom of expression, not in terms of censorship, but rather in terms of the need for artists to express themselves. To do that, they have to be able to earn a living, so it is another form of freedom of expression.

I would like to know whether, in terms of revenue or discoverability, artists should rely on the web giants or rather on us, on the government.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I would like us to be able to rely on the goodwill of digital companies. I would like them to show us that they do indeed care about the cultural specificity and the specific characteristics of Quebec and Canadian content. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

I think the government has to establish some ground rules and enforce them so that artists can express themselves. As my colleague said about freedom of expression, there has to be a playing field to apply it and express it.

I think that it is up to Parliament to set some guidelines, at the very least. An organization, the CRTC, will then make regulations on the details. The government certainly has a key role to play in the discoverability of content and in the expression of artists in various media.

[English]

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague and I sit on the heritage committee together and work well on protecting our cultural sovereignty. One of the things that I am proud about in Canada is that we have two official languages.

I was wondering if the member opposite can share with us the importance of the bill on online streaming in protecting and supporting artists in both official languages.

• (1815)

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga for his question. Following our discussion this afternoon, I thought he might ask his question in French, but maybe next time.

Amendments were debated and voted on last year when the House was studying Bill C-10. I was pleasantly surprised to see those amendments as clauses here in Bill C-11.

There are indeed provisions designed to promote the use of official languages by broadcasters, online or otherwise. It is indeed very important to promote minority cultural communities and indigenous cultures. In fact, I am absolutely delighted to see that the latter are becoming much easier to discover in various media and it is well worth doing so.

That is yet another example of why it is so important for us to make the rules ourselves and apply them to foreign companies with a digital presence here.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, which I really enjoyed. I especially liked the bit about quotas. When I was a little younger, hearing the same two or three songs by Ariane Moffatt and the Cowboys Fringants on the radio over and over bugged me even though I love those artists. Fortunately, time and musical diversity have granted us an appreciation for those kinds of quotas.

This might be more of a comment than a question. I would like to take a moment to recognize my colleague's work on this bill, especially its previous incarnation in the last Parliament as Bill C-10. Since our election in 2019, I have rarely seen such a tremendous amount of work go into making sure the Bloc Québécois's amendments are in the new version of the bill, so I wanted to take a moment to congratulate my dear colleague.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I did not hear a question, but I thank my colleague for her comments and will expand on them. She named some artists who became popular thanks to the quotas that were imposed many years before their time, when I was just starting out in radio.

That is fantastic. Ariane Moffatt, who is considered a veteran today, was a newcomer when I was just about at the end of my radio career. I think that makes an argument for the value of this bill and its many incentives for promoting our content.

[English]

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I join colleagues today from the national capital region, I respectfully acknowledge that the land on which I am located today is the traditional ancestral and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

The online streaming act is about updating the Canadian broadcasting system so that it better reflects our current environment. Our environment has changed drastically over the years since the last time our Broadcasting Act had any major reform back in 1991.

Although much of the discussion has centred on technological shifts over the last 30 years, today I want to focus our attention on the concerns and achievements and priorities of indigenous peoples with respect to broadcasting. Updating the act is necessary to affirm the important place that indigenous peoples have within the sector. We need to ensure space for indigenous voices, indigenous stories and indigenous sovereignty in the broadcasting system. So much has been achieved in the broadcasting and audiovisual sectors by indigenous peoples in Canada in the past 30 years.

The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network was founded in 1999 and recently launched its digital platform, APTN Lumi. ImagineNATIVE launched in 2000 and now is the world's largest indigenous media and arts festival. The Indigenous Screen Office was founded in 2017 and has quickly become an integral part of Canada's audiovisual sector. Canada's first national Inuktitut television channel, Uvagut TV, launched in January 2021, and helps to promote and revitalize Inuit cultures and languages.

Let us take a moment to recognize the accomplishments of indigenous broadcasters, of indigenous creators and storytellers. Let us build on that as a strong foundation.

There is no doubt in my mind that the online streaming act can support greater diversity, authentic representation and narrative sovereignty for indigenous peoples in Canada. Music and video are powerful media for shaping culture and changing opinions. Historical representations of first nations, Métis and Inuit people in the audiovisual sectors have reinforced racist notions toward indigenous peoples and have stifled their voices. It is now essential that the amendments to this bill advance narrative sovereignty for indige-

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nous screen-based storytellers and support opportunities for indigenous persons working in this sector. These changes will ensure that indigenous peoples will see more of themselves reflected on screen and will support indigenous peoples in their efforts to revitalize indigenous languages and cultures.

We hear that indigenous communities desire ownership and control of cultural content. We understand the importance of self-determination for indigenous peoples in Canada in not just seeing themselves on screen but in participating in the creation of songs and stories that are shared within Canada and across the world. Modernizing this legislation is an important first step in our shared path toward a more modern, more vibrant, more inclusive broadcasting system in Canada.

This bill intends to further support indigenous peoples in the broadcasting system. Many indigenous peoples rely on oral history and community transfer of knowledge, language and traditions. Broadcasting can assist that through the preservation of indigenous perspectives. Broadcasting is an education tool that can help break down stereotypes and advance reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. I imagine the tremendous benefits to Canadian society if indigenous voices are enhanced.

We created space for discussion. We listened with interest. The following key messages are what we heard: Indigenous storytelling, content creation and narrative sovereignty are important. Representation of indigenous peoples and the diversity of interests among first nations, Métis and Inuit is vital. The online streaming act follows on the path of ensuring that indigenous peoples can tell their stories from their perspectives and find content in the broadcasting system that reflects their lives and their experiences.

● (1820)

The act creates space for programming that reflects indigenous cultures and indigenous languages. It specifically states that the Canadian broadcasting system should “provide opportunities to Indigenous persons to produce programming in Indigenous languages, English or French, or in any combination of them, and to carry on broadcasting undertakings”.

It states, “programming that reflects the Indigenous cultures of Canada and programming that is in Indigenous languages should be provided”. This policy statement is now no longer qualified by the words “as resources become available”. This is as it should be.

The online streaming act will contribute to other activities designed to support indigenous peoples and culture. The government continues to work closely with the Indigenous Screen Office to empower communities and support Canada's diverse indigenous screen-based storytellers.

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Indigenous artists and stakeholders have raised many concerns over the misuse and misappropriation of indigenous arts and cultural expressions. Historically, indigenous stories have been excluded from mainstream media and, if included, were mostly told from the perspective of non-indigenous people. Supporting indigenous creators through an indigenous-led funding mechanism ensures that decisions over funding allocations are made by indigenous decision-makers, helping to advance narrative sovereignty in the audio-visual sector.

With the announcement of \$40.1 million over three years in budget 2021, the government is fully committed to supporting the Indigenous Screen Office as well as to providing additional ongoing funding so that more indigenous stories can be told and seen.

This bill would support indigenous creators so that they can tell their own stories in their own words, and it emphasizes the need for indigenous-run broadcasting services. The bill will contribute to fulfilling existing commitments through the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The government is committed to take action through consultation and co-operation with indigenous peoples to take all measures necessary to ensure that the bill as introduced is consistent with the declaration, prepare and implement an action plan to achieve the declaration's objectives and table an annual report on the progress to align the bill and the action plan.

In addition, the government is committed to partner with first nations, Inuit and Métis people to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action and to collaborate on the implementation of an action plan to respond to the calls for justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

As highlighted through these measures, broadcasting can play an important role in promoting and protecting indigenous languages, arts, cultures, traditions and perspectives that ensure that advancing reconciliation between indigenous peoples and non-indigenous peoples is continued and comes to a resolution. I am hopeful that the online streaming act will move us further along the path towards reconciliation.

Broadcasting plays an important role in making sure that all Canadians see themselves represented. It is a tool used for sharing information, making each other heard and listened to, while reminding us of our many origins and shared journey. It is the ability to shape culture, change opinions and point the way toward a better, more inclusive future.

The work does not end here. We are committed to continue listening to and speaking with indigenous peoples to ensure that their voices are heard and their stories are seen on screen. We are committed to meaningful partnerships and engagement with indigenous peoples to ensure the promotion and revitalization of indigenous cultures and languages. We are committed to ensuring a more inclusive space where that vital role of culture in the process of healing and reconciliation will be realized. Culture continues to play a role in the process of healing and reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

• (1825)

Indigenous cultures have been insufficiently reflected in our broadcasting system, which is a problem that the proposed online streaming act is trying to rectify. Culture is paramount to healing and reconciliation. It is at the core of understanding and moving forward together. I strongly urge the members of the House to support the online streaming act.

I would like to share my own personal experience with all of this. I immigrated to Canada when I was 12 years old. Throughout my youth, I did not really get to understand and appreciate the lived reality of indigenous peoples. It was not until I grew older that I actively sought to educate myself.

The best way for us to really include these cultures, to really try to actively reconcile with indigenous peoples here in Canada, through our online streaming is for us to make sure the way we are broadcasting and what we are broadcasting is inclusive, diverse and, most importantly, helps to shape the future of what we want our Canada to see.

We talk a lot about Canadian values. If we do not feel indigenous people are included in that, then we fail.

I will stop there as I believe I am out of time.

The Speaker: The hon. member will have eight minutes and 30 seconds coming to her when the debate starts again, and she can take up where she left off.

Pursuant to an order made earlier today, the House shall now resolve itself into committee of the whole to consider Motion No. 10 under government business.

* * *

• (1830)

RUSSIA'S ATTACK ON UKRAINE

(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 10, Mr. Anthony Rota in the chair)

The Speaker: Before we begin this evening's debate, I would like to remind hon. members of how proceedings will unfold.

Each member speaking will be allotted 10 minutes for debate, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments.

Pursuant to the order made earlier today, the time provided for the debate may be extended beyond four hours, as needed, to include a minimum of 16 periods of 20 minutes each. Members may divide their time with another member and the chair will receive no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent.

We can now begin tonight's take-note debate.

[*Translation*]

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.) moved:

That this committee take note of Russia's attack on Ukraine.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will share my time this evening with the Minister of National Defence.

[English]

Many countries in Europe still have civil defence sirens that date back to World War II. Some test them every month, some every year, but when sirens went off in Kyiv, Kharkiv and other cities in Ukraine last week, it was not a drill.

Ukraine is under attack. The sound of war reverberates throughout the whole world.

The Canadian government has long condemned Russia's incursion into Ukraine. Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected and the Ukrainian people must be free to determine their own future.

This invasion is unjust, unprovoked and illegal. As I said before, Russia will be held accountable.

[Translation]

Beginning last week, together with our allies and partners, Canada announced a series of coordinated sanctions. These sanctions are severe, and their effects are concrete. They target Russian institutions and banks as well as several individuals, including President Putin himself and his collaborators. They also target the government of Belarus, which is facilitating the invasion.

Canada also supports blocking Russian banks from the SWIFT banking network to freeze them out of the international financial system, and we are imposing measures to prevent the Russian central bank from getting around the sanctions.

[English]

The world is being inspired by Ukrainians who remain strong and resilient. Everyday people are bravely stepping up to defend their country, but despite their extraordinary courage, we cannot forget the devastating human consequences of war.

Three days ago, I received an email from a Ukrainian Canadian who lives in Calgary. He told me he had relatives and friends who were taking cover in basements trying to avoid the shelling. Over this past week, I have received many letters like this one.

We have all seen the images of subway stations being used as bomb shelters, of missiles striking apartment buildings, of families, including young children, leaving everything behind in search of somewhere safe.

The cost of war is always incalculable, but in these dark hours, Canada will continue to be resolute in its support for Ukraine.

[Translation]

Since 2015, the Canadian Armed Forces' Operation Unifier has trained over 33,000 members of the Ukrainian army. Today we applaud their ability to stand up to the invaders.

We continue to send weapons, military equipment and humanitarian aid, and we are working on bringing more Ukrainians to Canada faster.

Canadians continue to stand with Ukrainians. As I said to President Zelenskyy last week, we are all deeply inspired by his courage and the courage of his compatriots.

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President Putin clearly underestimated the strength and resilience of the Ukrainian people, just as he underestimated the determination of Ukraine's allies and partners.

• (1835)

[English]

When I was in Ukraine in 2016, the many people I met showed me how much they love their country and how hard they had fought for democracy. Listening to them reminded me of how peace and stability is not something we could or should ever take for granted.

Now, with the unfolding tragedy in Ukraine, the whole world is reminded once again just how fragile peace can be. In the shadow of authoritarianism, we here know that the path forward is the rule of law, universal values and freedom. That is why Canadians and members of this House stand united with Ukraine.

Democracies everywhere stand together. We stand with the people around the globe protesting against this brutal war, from Vancouver to Montreal, from Berlin to Prague, from Minsk to Moscow and St. Petersburg. We hear their voices and we all hope they will overcome the sound of sirens and bombs.

Slava Ukraini.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Prime Minister for his words this evening. One of the things that Canadians are talking about a lot and we have been discussing throughout the course of today is the need for energy independence and energy security in this country, whether it is liquefied natural gas or natural resource production, making sure that this country, our Canada, is energy secure.

Could the Prime Minister speak to the events that have happened in Russia and the need to secure energy in this country?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, over the past number of weeks, we have been working closely with our allies in Europe who indeed are dependent to a large degree on imports of energy from Russia and are right now in a difficult position. That is why we are so touched by the steadfastness and the strength of the European response in putting severe sanctions on Russia, even though there is uncertainty in terms of their energy security. I have assured them that Canada and countries around the world will be there to support them as they move forward.

Canada is a producer and exporter of energy. We have banned, as of today, any imports, which were already negligible, from Russia of crude oil. We will continue to work with the world to make sure that we can stand strongly against Russia and support people in democracies everywhere.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the general convergence of ideas in the House in the face of shared adversity. This has not happened often. I understand that the government is working with major international organizations like the G7 and NATO, among others. This is what the Bloc Québécois and likely many others were hoping to see, and it was definitely the only way forward.

However, certain decisions still need to be made domestically, such as continuing to require visas for people to come to Canada from Ukraine.

I hope my colleagues will not mind the comparison, but not all that long ago, people were crossing at Roxham Road without a visa. People were doing it, and perhaps they still are. Should we not show the same leniency to people who want to reunite with their families or come to Canada as refugees?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, as we have watched tensions rise over the past several weeks as a result of Russian threats, our department and Minister of Citizenship and Immigration have been working to expedite the process that allows Ukrainians to come to Canada. That is exactly what we have done.

The processing of the applications already in the system is being expedited to allow people to come to Canada faster and to allow those already here to stay longer. We are also looking at ways to speed up the process for people fleeing the war in Ukraine who want to come to Canada.

We hope that many of these people will choose to stay in Canada even after this unjust war is over. We will always be there to welcome people fleeing war all over the world, and we will be there for our Ukrainian friends too.

• (1840)

[*English*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are witnessing a humanitarian crisis unfold in Ukraine with bombings, attacks and casualties, and Canada must do its part as countries around the world are stepping up.

One of the things we can do is learn from the past when there were significant problems with welcoming people in an emergency crisis. I look to Afghanistan as an example of what not to do when we failed in ensuring the safety of our allies to get to Canada.

When will the Prime Minister ensure that we have a visa-free, barrier-free access to Canada for Ukrainians who are seeking refuge in this time of crisis?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, in the weeks leading up to this terrible last week we have had, Canada was already positioning itself in case the worst, which did come to pass, came to pass.

Our immigration ministry and minister have been working hard to ensure more resources for treatment of requests to come to Canada, opportunities to accelerate the treatment of work permits to Canada and opportunities to stretch out the permits of those who are here now. Most importantly, they have been working hard to make sure we are able to take in as many Ukrainians who are flee-

ing the violence as possible to be able to settle in Canada, to hunker down while this passes, or perhaps even, as so many Ukrainians have over so many generations, choose to stay for good in Canada.

We know that Canada has been extraordinarily enriched by Canadians of Ukrainian heritage. We will continue to be there to welcome in Ukrainians to build a better life for themselves here and also back home in Ukraine.

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Putin's actions over the past week are appalling for all of us who stand for peace, security and democracy.

I would like to send my very best to President Zelenskyy, Minister Reznikov and the Ukrainian people for their strong resistance against Putin's ruthless aggression and unnecessary war.

[*Translation*]

I know that many Canadians are watching Putin's appalling attacks on the Ukrainian people and want to know how they can help and what we as a government are doing to help.

[*English*]

Russia is a direct threat not only to the people of Ukraine but also to global safety and stability. In the face of this brutal assault on the Ukrainian people, our support for Ukraine is unwavering.

[*Translation*]

From day one, Canada has been there for the army and people of Ukraine. We have consistently supported Ukraine and our NATO allies in the face of this unprovoked attack by Russia.

[*English*]

We have provided lethal and non-lethal equipment to bolster their defences. Canada has pledged millions of dollars in defensive military equipment to Ukraine. First, \$23 million in equipment has been delivered since 2015. Second, \$10 million in equipment was delivered earlier this month, including sniper rifles and ammunition.

Third, just yesterday, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and I announced an additional \$25 million in non-lethal aid, including night vision gear, helmets and body armour. These items have been specifically requested by the Ukrainian government, and we are stepping up to meet its needs alongside our allies.

To support the delivery of aid and to contribute to NATO efforts in Europe, Canada is also providing two C-130J tactical airlift aircraft for a minimum of two weeks. One of these aircraft departed Canada for Europe today and the other will follow later this week.

At the request of Ukraine and in coordination with NATO allies, we announced today that we are committing additional lethal aid to Ukraine, including at least 100 anti-tank weapon systems and 2,000 rockets, which we are working to deliver as quickly as possible in the coming days.

• (1845)

[*Translation*]

We are also boosting our support for NATO's eastern flank while waiting for Operation Reassurance.

[*English*]

To date, the Canadian Armed Forces have delivered well over 700 training sessions throughout Operation Unifier: Canada's military training mission in Ukraine. In addition, we have 3,400 soldiers at the ready in case they are called up by NATO to serve for our alliance in a defensive and deterrent posture.

Canada is not alone in this mission to help Ukraine. NATO allies are more united than ever. The world has become a dangerous place, and while these dangers can feel far away to Canadians, these are tumultuous times. We must unite as a country and redouble our efforts to support our allies. We stand with the people of Ukraine. We will continue to support them in the face of unwarranted Russian aggression.

Slava Ukraini.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of National Defence for her support of Ukraine and for the announcement today of providing some anti-tank missiles and more ammunition, which the Ukrainian military needs desperately. I know that we have been putting pressure on the minister for some time to do this. It was back in 2018 when Conservatives first said that the weapons that were originally destined for the Kurdish Peshmerga could be sent over to help Ukraine, which included anti-tank missiles at that time.

In addition to the announcement today, I would like to know the time frame for when those will actually get delivered. Are they going to be procured here in North America, or are they coming from existing inventory that we have in Canada? Ultimately, how do we get more of them to help Ukraine in the battle against the Russian federation?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, I must say it is heartening to see politics put aside in times of crisis.

In response to the member's questions directly, we are working to get this lethal aid into the hands of Ukrainian soldiers as soon as possible. In order to do that, we are working very closely with our allies to ensure safe passage of the lethal aid, as well as safe delivery to the Canadian Armed Forces and to Ukrainian soldiers as well.

In terms of the member's question relating to the inventory itself, the lethal aid that we have announced today does come from existing inventory. I will continue to reiterate that all hands are on deck. We are continuing to ensure that we are responding as quickly as possible to the requests of the Ukrainian government. My conversations with Minister Reznikov over the past number of weeks have

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been instrumental in allowing us to know precisely what Ukraine needs and how we can best deliver it to them.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I would like her thoughts on the following.

We know that the Ukrainians are fighting with extraordinary strength, courage and resilience. While 500,000 people have left Ukraine so far, it is possible that in future, that number could be closer to five million. We hope not, but it could happen.

In order to be prepared and avoid the same unfortunate mistakes that have been made recently, including in Afghanistan, I would like the minister to tell us in what ways the Canadian Armed Forces are ready to play a humanitarian role in welcoming people leaving Ukraine, in collaboration with the other NATO countries and the countries bordering Ukraine.

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that the Canadian Armed Forces are ready to help Ukrainians who leave their country.

We have already imposed increasingly harsher sanctions, we have trained more than 33,000 Ukrainian soldiers, and we have given and delivered significant financial aid. We have also delivered lethal and non-lethal aid. We have provided cyber-support. That is very important in today's urgent situations. Finally, we have contributed to bolstering NATO'S eastern flank through Operation Reassurance.

The Canadian Armed Forces are always ready, and we are there for the Ukrainian people.

• (1850)

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during this conflict, we have seen the Russian army direct intentional attacks against civilians and civilian targets.

I want to know how the Canadian government is documenting these possible crimes. How will we work with our allies to make sure that Russian military commanders and their civilian oversight are held to account after this conflict, so they do not escape justice?

Hon. Anita Anand: Mr. Speaker, we know that these attacks, cyber-attacks included, are part of the Russian playbook.

We have been watching Russian escalation at the Ukrainian border for months. We are very well prepared, in terms of our intelligence and connections with the Ukrainian government, to document the loss of life. More important, however, is making sure that we are stepping up with humanitarian and economic aid, and ensuring safe passage for Ukrainians as they leave Ukraine.

We are doing all three. We have provided over \$700-million worth of economic and humanitarian aid thus far alone, and we are also ensuring safe passage for Ukrainians as they leave their country.

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Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are painful and heartbreaking days for the people of Ukraine. It is unbelievable to watch images of families fleeing violence, citizens volunteering and lining up to receive weapons to fight for their country, and parents sending their children away to safety while they stay behind to defend Ukraine.

In the last few days, the world has seen the defiance and strength of Ukrainians standing up for their freedom, independence and sovereignty against the unprovoked aggression of a violent dictator. Their voices were joined by millions of people here in Canada and around the world, including thousands of Russians who took to the streets to oppose the war. Many of them were dragged away to prison. As the official opposition, Conservatives stand shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine and its people and we condemn Putin and his gang in the strongest and harshest terms possible.

Putin's ongoing invasion of Ukraine is the first major European conflict since the Second World War. It is a serious violation of both international law and our collective humanity. This amounts to the most serious threat to the rules-based international order since 1945 and because of that, it is a serious threat to global peace and security. That is why Conservatives fully support the actions taken by the Government of Canada thus far, but we are calling on the Liberals to do more.

On Saturday, we released our proposals for immediate additional action and I would like to outline them for members tonight. First, we are urging the federal government to expel Russia's ambassador from Canada right away. Second, we are asking the government to recall Canada's ambassador from Moscow. Third, we are asking the government to direct the CRTC to revoke the licence of Russia Today so that Putin's propaganda machine can no longer reach Canadian homes. We are glad that companies such as Rogers, Telus, Bell and Shaw have already done this, but we would like to see the federal government take more of a lead on this issue.

Fourth, we believe Russia should be isolated internationally and are urging its removal from organizations such as the G20 and the OSCE. Fifth, we are encouraging the government to implement visa-free travel from Ukraine to Canada to help families escape here to safety. The Ukrainian people do not want to be permanent refugees. They want to be able to live in a free, peaceful and sovereign Ukraine, but Canada can be a safe haven for them in this moment.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

The Conservatives support Ukraine. The Russian invasion is a threat to peace, the world order and global security. This is why we support the measures taken by the Canadian government. We are, however, calling on the government to take additional action, such as strengthening our defences and our commitment to NATO to counter Russia's threats.

[*English*]

The Liberal government cannot afford to take our peace and security for granted any longer. We need to take Putin's threats seriously. We need to make sure Canada is prepared to face aggression with the same level of determination we have seen in the Ukrainian

people. That is why Conservatives are calling on the government to come forward with a robust plan to defend Canada's Arctic security and sovereignty. This includes modernizing NORAD's early warning system. It is also time that we fix Canada's long-broken military procurement system. We must accelerate the national shipbuilding program and, finally, it is time to purchase F-35 jets. In addition, we need to work in closer co-operation with Scandinavian allies and the United States to ensure Canada's north remains Canada's. Liberals have ignored our Arctic for six years, and this Russian invasion of Ukraine should be a wake-up call to get serious about Canada's Arctic.

Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine has highlighted another serious problem. Russia supplies as much as 40% of Europe's natural gas, and we are seeing it use this power to intimidate Europeans and Ukrainians. If supplies are cut, people cannot heat their homes. Entire industries will collapse and Europe's GDP will plummet. Canada has the answer here. Canada is the world's fifth-largest natural gas producer, but we cannot export gas to our European allies because we cannot get pipelines built.

The Liberal government has failed repeatedly to recognize that Canadian oil and gas is the most ethical and from the most environmentally responsible oil and gas industry in the world. It is clearer than ever that Canada's oil and gas is vital to the security and sovereignty of both Canada and Europe. It is clearer than ever that when the Liberals stop, delay and hamstring Canadian oil and gas from being extracted, transported and sold both at home and abroad, the biggest winner in every way, shape and form is Putin. Canada and the world lose and Putin wins. Why in the world would we want to do anything to help Putin fund his war chest? The Liberals need to stop putting up roadblocks to oil and gas development and exports. We need to get new pipelines built so that we can sell our energy to Europe and others and end Russia's monopoly on natural gas.

For over a century, Canadians of Ukrainian descent have enriched our communities and our culture, especially in the Prairies, where I am from. Canada, and Manitoba in particular, share ties with Ukraine that cannot be broken by war and aggression. When Ukraine declared independence from the Soviet Union three decades ago, it was Canada, under a Conservative Prime Minister, that was the first country to recognize its sovereignty. We must honour that legacy. As Canadian parliamentarians, I know we honour that legacy.

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Canada's security is tied to Europe, and the Conservatives know that. Canada must strengthen its own defences and renew our commitment to the NATO alliance in the face of the threats from both Russia and China. As we speak tonight, Ukrainian families are huddled in subway stations calling for our help, just as the British did during the Blitz over eight decades ago. A country that faced the horrors of the Stalin regime with the Holodomor, but nonetheless emerged from the grasp of communist dictators, is again fighting off tyranny and violence. We must stand with them.

The federal government has stepped up in the last few days, but there is more that can be done. As they say in Ukraine, *Slava Ukraini*. Glory to Ukraine. Glory to the heroes. However, let us do more than just say those words. Let us take action now, and in the days and months to come, to do the right thing for Ukraine, for Canadians and indeed for the world.

• (1900)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the interim Leader of the Opposition for the demonstration of unity we have seen in this chamber on such a pressing global issue. I know that in my riding in Toronto, in Manitoba and right around the country, we have seen Canadians of all backgrounds and demographics coming forward, standing up for democracy against Russian aggression and calling out for what we need from this Parliament. We have seen some of that delivered just today, with the additional lethal munitions and lethal armaments to assist Ukraine in defending its sovereignty.

However, Canadians have also talked to people like me, who represent Ukrainian Canadians, and others in this chamber about a distinct type of threat that is emerging: threats to cybersecurity and cyber-threats. I am wondering if the interim Leader of the Opposition could comment on how we combat this pernicious threat in the online world, where cyber-threats are festering. Will her party work with our party in combatting this, including combatting what exists online, and in getting tough with important cyber-threats?

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, indeed, threats to cybersecurity have been a reality for a number of years. I know when we were in government and I was parliamentary secretary for public safety, we were talking about it. It is almost a new theatre of war. Cybersecurity threats come from Putin and Russia, but also from other countries, like China. That is why it is so important that we move forward quickly to ban Huawei. There are immediate threats we have to take seriously. As a country, working together with our allies and listening to our allies that have already banned Huawei is something practical we can do. However, we certainly recognize the threat.

I think there is another thing in this discussion that we should be recognizing. We talk about Russia and the Russian threat, but let us be clear: This is a threat from Putin. There are millions of Russian people in Russia and around the world who do not support what Putin is doing, and I think it is really important we recognize that. They are good people who are right now just as saddened, heartbroken and terrified at what this dictator is doing. I just want to make sure that is on the record as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Portage—Lisgar for her comments and for her description of the situation. However, the only way for parties to resolve a conflict is through dialogue.

I would like to know why my colleague is so insistent that the ambassador or his representatives be sent back to Russia when that will ultimately only disrupt the dialogue.

[*English*]

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, I agree that in some ways it is symbolic. However, in our world order, it is an important symbolic gesture and an actual action to make. Sending an ambassador home and recalling an ambassador sends a strong message that the country and the leader of that country, in this case Russia, are being isolated. I do not believe we can negotiate with Putin. I do not think diplomacy works with him. That has been made very clear.

To answer the member's question, we all agree it is, in a sense, a gesture, but it is an important one. I could be wrong, and the government could have more information on this, but maybe the Russian ambassador to Canada is saying something to our government right now or will say something publicly against Putin. I have not heard that, but I think we would very much welcome it. That could change our position. However, at this point, we have not heard the Russian ambassador say anything against what Putin is doing, which means he is onside. In that case, he needs to leave the country, and it is our government that needs to expel him.

• (1905)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I represent an Alberta district, Edmonton Griesbach, and many Ukrainian families have come to me looking for support, particularly for their loved ones overseas. Right now, the government's IRCC system is backlogged, broken and ineffective.

Would the member please comment and elaborate on the need to reunify Ukrainian families and the need to ensure that IRCC plays a major role in reuniting Ukrainians and bringing them to safety?

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, I think we are all feeling the same way. We want to be able to help Ukrainians who are fleeing.

As I said in my speech, I do not think Ukrainian people want to be permanent refugees anywhere. They want to be able to live in their home nation of Ukraine, a free, sovereign, peaceful nation. However, in the meantime, Canada could be a safe haven. Our suggestion is that we ask the government to remove the visa requirement.

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We all saw what happened when Afghanistan came under attack. We were not able to bring people to Canada and protect them in the way that was expected of a nation like Canada. What we are trying to say to the government is let us get rid of the red tape right now so that we can immediately try to help people who want to come to Canada to be protected until peace is restored in their home nation.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, would the hon. Leader of the Opposition and her party consider adding to the list of actions we should take? Looking across Canada, we see the assets in this country bought by Russian oligarchs, the millions of dollars in real estate. Could we move fast to seize those assets to send a message to Putin and his cronies?

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, that is definitely something we could support. It is very disturbing to see Putin's assets being protected and hidden. Money laundering is a big problem in Canada, not just with Russian oligarchs, but also with the Chinese.

This is a prime opportunity to deal with some of these major problems that we have seen occurring in the country. Canada should not be a safe haven for gangsters, thugs and dictators to protect their money. That has to stop. This is the best time and we are all in agreement. Let us get it done. Let us punish some of these dictators.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is united for the people of Ukraine.

One of the things my leader raised in her speech was the importance of Europe's reliance on Russian gas and how that has put so much at risk. It is funding the very missiles and tanks that are invading Ukraine today. Canada could play that special role. We also know the Americans bring in 590,000 barrels of Russian oil every day.

Could Canada ensure European security through our energy products? Could we work with the Americans to secure North American markets so that we keep Putin from being financed by our dollars, American dollars and European dollars?

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing highlighted are some areas that have been ignored or maybe not represented in an honest, real way over the last number of years. However, today and in the last week, they have really come to light.

One of them is Canadian oil and gas and the benefit that it plays on the world stage. We have been proponents of it. Canada has the most ethically responsible oil and gas, but usually this is in the conversation around the environment and climate change. We have been fighting for Canadian oil and gas to be used on the world stage because we believe it is the best thing for the environment. Lo and behold, it is also the best thing for the world's safety, security and energy sovereignty. We are seeing that today.

We are here to say this as Conservatives, and we think it is time for the whole House to agree: Let us be champions of Canadian oil and gas, because it is good for the environment and, even more importantly, it is good for protecting our sovereignty. As we are seeing today, the biggest threats to our globe right now are dictators and tyrants like Vladimir Putin. Let us put that into perspective and do what we can as Canadians to protect sovereignty, peace and security. We do that by getting Canadian energy to the world.

• (1910)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the ribbon I am wearing is a little different from my colleagues' because I got it yesterday during the march in support of the people of Ukraine in Montreal.

People in Montreal, in Quebec, probably in Canada, as well as in major cities and capitals around the globe, stand united in their condemnation of these serious, indefensible acts of aggression, which are driven by the vilest propaganda and disinformation, not to say outright lies. This aggression is the sole doing of a dictator whose only friends are himself, a few oligarchs who must be starting to worry about their bank accounts, and, above all, violence.

The right to self-determination is often viewed as something to be won, for example, with the Scots, the people of Catalonia, the Kurds or the unique situation in Taiwan. It is less common to see this right as something that must not be lost, that people do not want to lose, that they must protect with their voices, their hearts and sometimes, unfortunately, with weapons.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the people of Ukraine and commend them for their courage. I also commend Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who has stepped up to his role and appears to be the driving force behind that courage.

Confronting a dictator like Russia's boss and his fantasies of conquest is a risky exercise. Imposing sanctions is not without risks, but it is still less risky than choosing, as an international organization, to take up arms.

I would like to think that the sheer scope and scale of the sanctions that have been and are being imposed on Russia are having an effect. The closure of airspace, the penalties imposed on the operations and functions of banks, the cutting off of trade, the limitations on oil exports, all of these are having an effect.

Unfortunately, a dictator must not be confused with the people he governs with an iron fist. In terms of consequences, freedom, and enjoyment of life, President Putin's first victim is the Russian people themselves. Inspired, it seems, by some of the worst moments in history, he seems to want to extend his grip.

Therefore, how can we not take action despite the risks, the threats, the bravado, the grandstanding, the verbal attacks and the lies? We must take action.

We were talking about this a little earlier: One of the things I think is important is the need to be a land of welcome. Canada and Quebec are already home to a large number of Ukrainian nationals and descendants of Ukrainians who are watching the situation in Ukraine with the great concern.

However, they are often buoyed by a rising sense of confidence, inspired by the fierce resistance of the Ukrainian army—and of Ukrainian civilians, sports figures, or teachers who are taking up arms to protect a freedom they all rightfully believe in.

● (1915)

The Prime Minister mentioned that one of the things that can be done to help people who will be displaced and will have to go somewhere is to facilitate their future arrival, family reunification and the welcoming of refugees. I am pleased that the House mostly agrees on what Ukrainians need. However, I do wonder why the government has not lifted the requirement for the usual visas.

A little earlier, I gave the example of the tens of thousands of people who crossed the border at Roxham Road. The problem was not the number of people but the lack of officials, efficient immigration reception structures and language instruction, especially for the very large number, if not the majority, of people who remained in Quebec. If we were able to show such compassion for irregular entries that were easy to control, why not do the same in a context of war?

I urge the Prime Minister and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to reconsider this.

The significant restrictions on Russia's oil exports are among the sanctions and negative repercussions for the Russian economy. I will respectfully repeat that I have a major problem with this. Our national security and that of other countries does not depend on increasing the extraction, transport and trade of oil, but rather on freeing ourselves from this constraint, which continues to be just as dangerous for the planet today as it was two weeks ago.

I want to believe that what I am hearing in the House is not the exploitation of a tragic conflict to benefit western Canada's oil sector, which, in any scenario, with the proposed infrastructure, would not get anywhere before Vladimir Putin himself was relegated to a rocking chair. I urge all members to be wary of this false pretence dressed up as an opportunity.

Certain measures must be considered. Russia must be expelled from all international institutions to which it belongs. That said, I do not see the point of expelling the ambassador. While this may not apply to the Russian president, they do say “weapons or words”. Once talks reopen and economic sanctions produce their results, we are going to need a channel of communication, and that is the role of diplomacy. I think we sometimes have to hold our nose and maintain diplomatic ties.

We will support Ukraine, which wants to be free, wants to remain free. Many Quebeckers can relate to that despite never having experienced anything like what Ukrainians are going through. The Bloc Québécois believes in that for Ukraine as much as it believes in it for Quebec.

Government Orders

I feel I speak for all Quebeckers when I say to the Ukrainian people and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that they have our steadfast support and friendship.

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the leader of the Bloc Québécois for his speech. I would also like to thank the Bloc Québécois members for their enthusiastic support of the measures the Government of Canada implemented recently to aid Ukraine during these extremely difficult times.

Today, the Government of Canada announced a third shipment of arms, anti-tank weapons this time, to Ukraine.

I would like to ask the leader of the Bloc Québécois if he supports this decision. Why does he think sending weapons to the Ukrainian army is very important?

● (1920)

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate. For a long time, many of us, including me, said we needed to be careful about sending weapons, because weapons never foster peace.

However, the situation forced upon Ukrainians by the Russian president is so desperate that it seems necessary to offer these men, women, soldiers and civilians a way to try to preserve their safety and dignity.

In this context, we also understand the symbolism of sending in anti-tank weapons, even though they may not be the latest model, considering that the people of Ukraine are facing a disproportionate military power and that these tanks, which are ruthlessly rolling through the streets of their peaceful cities, must indeed be removed by force, if necessary.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the leader of the Bloc Québécois.

As my leader mentioned, we see a serious problem. Many countries, including Canada, use natural gas from Russia. This is a big problem for the world, and it is obvious that countries that purchase natural gas from Mr. Putin are undermining Ukraine.

I would like to hear the Bloc leader's thoughts on using only Canadian natural gas, instead of natural gas and oil from other countries.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, merit comes with intent. What is the intention here?

Is the intention of my colleague's remarks to generously and compassionately ensure Europe's energy security?

Or is this just another attempt to find new markets to increase trade in western Canadian oil? There is no scenario in which western Canada would be able to get oil to Europe in a timely manner using the infrastructure projects we have heard about. It would have to use completely archaic means of transport.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are many things the member for Beloeil—Chambly and I agree upon, as a matter of fact. One part I would like the member to elaborate on more is funding for our allies in Ukraine and making sure they have the resources they need.

The government has been able to support Ukraine with some funding, but much more needs to be done. Would the member agree that the Government of Ukraine needs money in hand now more than ever?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, I think that more money is in fact needed and that there is nothing foolish about saying so.

I get the impression that there will be more money. I cannot criticize the government for that. However, it might be easier to send supplies directly, considering how the situation might change with each passing day in terms of money, the ability to use money, the channels for sending money, the channels for sending the means to buy weapons or daily essentials.

There are many ways to help. It will cost something. I think it is important to focus less on what this will cost and more on to how our spending will help. I therefore expect the world's major democracies to spend a significant amount, whether it be by providing monetary aid or various other types of aid, including humanitarian.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saaneich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. leader of the Bloc Québécois. I completely agree with him and I appreciate him having the courage to clearly say that we have no reason to support fossil fuels.

Today, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC, published a new report stating quite clearly how close we are to the tipping point of a major planetary disaster. We are facing security threats and planetary threats.

I found a quote by Svitlana Krakovska, head of the Ukrainian delegation at the IPCC negotiations. She said:

• (1925)

[English]

She said, “Human-induced climate change and the war on Ukraine have the same roots—fossil fuels—and our dependence on them,” and “We will not surrender in Ukraine, and we hope the world will not surrender in building a climate resilient future”.

[Translation]

I would like my colleague's comments on that, please.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to derail this debate entirely, but that report is alarming. It really made me question whether the people who hold the political and economic power are prepared to deal with or mitigate the fallout of climate change. Are they just insulating themselves from the impact of climate change by accumulating more wealth and selling more oil? Climate change will hurt many other people who are far less wealthy.

That is horribly cynical. I do not think that producing and exporting more oil helps Ukraine or anyone. I think that we need to be looking at other solutions all around.

Obviously, since we need to transition much more quickly, western Canada will not be a supplier for Europe.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was starting to feel like I was too small for you to notice me.

Anyway, earlier today I asked the government whether the same sanctions that have so far been imposed on Russia should also be imposed on Belarus, which has been complicit in this invasion. The Russians would not be at Kyiv's doorstep today if Belarus had not given them access to invade Ukraine from the north.

My question for the Bloc Québécois leader is the following. Should we not impose the same sanctions on Belarus as have so far been imposed on Russia?

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, I would hope that it will be just a matter of hours before the government adopts an approach similar to that of the rest of the world. A growing number of governments across Europe are imposing on Belarus sanctions comparable to those imposed on Russia. That one dictator is serving as an accomplice to another dictator does not make the first dictator less guilty than the second.

The people of Belarus are being oppressed and have been egregiously dominated by evil means. Strategically speaking, it is clear that amassing troops on the border between Ukraine and Belarus was the quickest way to reach Kyiv, which, today, as far as we know and from what we are hearing, whether it is true or somewhat true, is fighting a fierce, courageous and very human battle for its dignity. With that in mind, in order to slow down, curb, contain, stop and perhaps get everyone out of Ukraine who has no business being there, I do believe that Belarus should be subject to the same sanctions.

The Speaker: Before resuming debate, I would like to remind members that there are many people who would like to ask questions. Although members may feel somewhat ignored, the Chair is not ignoring you at all. Members will take turns, and we will ensure that everyone has the opportunity to ask a question in due course.

Therefore, I am asking you to please be patient and persevere, and every member will be able to ask their question.

• (1930)

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats strongly condemn President Putin's flagrant aggression against Ukraine, and we stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. My thoughts go out to all Ukrainians who are worried about this unprovoked and unjustified attack by Russia.

War always brings terrible loss of life and human suffering. As Canada has welcomed a significant population of Ukrainian Canadians, I spoke with some of them today who shared their worries and fears. I spoke with a young man whose parents still live in Ukraine, and despite the fact that his parents live in the western region, which has not seen as much military action, his family lives just kilometres away from where rockets fell. I spoke with Bohdana, who shared with me her fears and that she cannot sleep at night. She has family, friends and cousins she is trying to sponsor, and she cannot sleep at night without making sure that they are okay. She has not slept many hours over the past number of days. She is constantly checking in and constantly worried that something might happen. These are just two of the many stories from Ukrainian Canadians who are deeply worried about what is happening in Ukraine.

In this serious crisis, I will outline two specific areas where Canada can play a significant role in supporting people at this time. First is stronger and more severe sanctions, and second is an emphasis on humanitarian relief.

To begin with the sanctions, the Liberal government must continue to use all tools to deter Putin's aggressive actions. What we can specifically do is impose additional economic sanctions where it hurts Putin, which is by sanctioning Putin's closest oligarchs. I spoke with Bill Browder who is the author and the motivating force behind the Magnitsky Law in Canada and the Magnitsky acts in other countries. He outlined that the current sanctions in place both in Canada and in other countries ignore many of the ultrawealthy oligarchs who hoard Putin's wealth. These oligarchs are well known through the diligent work of many activists and advocates, including Mr. Browder.

We can use the Magnitsky Law in Canada, and there are two categories, one for human rights violations and one for corruption. We know who these oligarchs are. Many of them were identified by Alexei Navalny, a political opponent who Putin imprisoned, tortured and attempted to kill with poison. We need to use the tools that we have to hit Putin where it hurts, with the money he has hoarded in the names of the oligarchs whose resources are located in countries around the world.

We also need more tools to identify where the oligarchs are hiding their money and deal with money laundering in general. We can accelerate the creation of a publicly available, nationwide beneficial ownership registry. This would provide transparency on property ownership in Canada, including those owned by oligarchs whom we know have property in Canada. The current timeline for this registry is 2025, which is simply too far away.

Putin's greed is well documented. It is his weakness. It is well known that the oligarchs hoard his wealth, the wealth that he has stolen from the Russian people. We need to stand up to Putin and do it in a way that hurts him most, which is with his wealth and by sanctioning those oligarchs with the tools we have. We need to do that. It would create significant leverage by putting pressure on Putin to end this war.

Second, we need more support in humanitarian aid, and I will break that down into two areas. Since Russia invaded Crimea in 2014, 1.5 million Ukrainians have been displaced from their homes.

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Many came to Canada after the initial invasion eight years ago and have successfully resettled in communities across the country. With Russia's current invasion of Ukraine, the situation for people on the ground has become unfathomably more dire. Ukrainians will be seeking safety and refuge in Canada, and for years we have been calling for visa-free access for Ukrainians. We are calling for urgent action, and that is what we need to do.

● (1935)

The government must work collaboratively to support and resettle those who have been displaced by this escalating humanitarian crisis. We need to automatically extend expiring documents and permits for all Ukrainians currently in Canada. Those who are already here should not be compelled to return to severe risk and danger in Ukraine. We need to ensure that it is easy and that there is barrier-free access for people who are seeking refuge and safety.

We also need to increase humanitarian aid. Ukrainian people need our support more than ever and Canada needs to plan for that humanitarian aid. The crisis is worsening and families are torn apart. Children have been killed. Over half a million Ukrainians have fled the country in a few days, with many more internally displaced. All children in the Ukraine, at least 7.5 million, those who are under 18 years old, are in grave danger of physical harm, severe emotional distress and displacement.

Canada must work with our allies, including the United Nations, to respond appropriately to this terrible situation.

As we have seen with the Syrian crisis, neighbouring countries who host refugees rely on significant support from those donor communities to ensure that the basic needs of the refugees in local populations are met. We ask the government to ensure that additional funds to Ukraine will not be diverted from the existing humanitarian envelope that continues to necessitate Canada's attention.

We are pleased to see the matching funds for the \$10 million for the Red Cross, but this is just a drop in the bucket in terms of the massive needs. We need a plan with significant financial commitments to helping Ukrainians, both within Ukraine and those who have managed to get to safety in neighbouring countries. Members of Canada's humanitarian coalition are operating in Ukraine and its neighbouring countries, and they also deserve our support.

The Ukrainian community in Canada is also offering to provide support and is raising funds. We need to support those efforts as well. We know that there will soon be a UN call for funding and Canada must provide its fair share of support for this call.

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[Translation]

New Democrats strongly condemn President Putin's flagrant aggression against Ukraine, and we stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. My thoughts go out to all Ukrainians who are worried about this unprovoked and unjustified attack by Russia.

War always brings terrible loss of life and human suffering. Earlier today, I spoke with Canadians of Ukrainian origin who are terribly worried for their friends and family in Ukraine.

We must help immediately. We must boost sanctions against Putin's oligarchs and increase humanitarian aid to Ukrainians and to organizations helping those seeking refuge. We must work fast to help people seeking refuge in Canada get here safely.

[English]

In light of the escalating crisis, we must recognize that Ukrainians seeking safety from the dangers right now in their homeland do not have months to spare. The most urgent action is required. The government must do everything in its power to help these people find safe haven from the threat of violence in Ukraine caused by Russia.

New Democrats stand in solidarity with Ukraine and with the people of Ukraine. We commend and acknowledge their courage, and we encourage the government to offer all help possible to support them in this time of need.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member for this thoughts and his speech. It seems to be a general consensus that sanctions are the way to go, specifically Magnitsky sanctions.

He mentioned that he had a conversation with Bill Browder. I have always appreciated the advice that Mr. Browder has shared with me over the years. I was just wondering if the hon. member could share with the House any specific thoughts that Mr. Browder had with respect to sanctions and any specificity, particularly on Magnitsky sanctions.

● (1940)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Browder really wanted to highlight that sanctions will only work if they target Putin. Putin is not someone who cares about his country. He has robbed from the country. However, he does care about his wealth, and his wealth is hoarded by oligarchs.

The member pointed out that Magnitsky laws provide for the provision of corruption. There are many cases where we can tie oligarchs who are close to Putin with corruption, and those oligarchs need to be sanctioned. We need to start naming and sanctioning specific oligarchs closely connected to Putin who are involved in corruption. That will significantly impact Putin in a way that can apply real leverage and pressure on him to stop this war.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP talked about Magnitsky sanctions. As a matter of fact, I worked very closely with Bill Browder when former senator Raynell Andreychuk, who was from the other place, and I brought forward legislation in 2017 to have the Magnitsky Act become legislation. Unfortunately, the federal government has not used Magnitsky sanctions since 2018.

For people to understand how the kleptocracy works in the Kremlin and Russia and how corrupt Vladimir Putin and his inner circle are, everyone needs to read *Red Notice*. Bill Browder wrote that book about Sergei Magnitsky, who his lawyer and accountant at the time, and who was trying to tell the truth of what was happening there. Sadly, of course, he was arrested, impugned and beaten. He then died from his injuries in prison.

We know we have a lot more work to do. I would ask the leader of the NDP to talk more about how the government should be using Magnitsky sanctions because it sends the message, in concert with our allies from around the world, that our country cannot be used as a safe haven for corrupt foreign officials, for those who steal from their own citizenry and commit gross human rights violations. We have never seen human rights violations for a long time at the level we are witnessing right now in Ukraine, and they are all being carried out by Vladimir Putin and his war machine.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, what has been identified really clearly is, if we want to apply pressure on Putin, the current approach with sanctions, while symbolically important, will not impact him. He has amassed significant wealth by stealing from his own country, so sanctions on the country will not be sufficient to curtail his actions or send a clear message that will hurt Putin personally.

The only way to apply pressure in this case is make President Putin feel the pain. We know that his wealth is held and hoarded by oligarchs, many of whom have been identified by many advocates. We need to identify and sanction those specific oligarchs with Magnitsky law, the sanctions and powers we have. That will send a very powerful message and hurt Putin where it counts, which is his greed and the wealth he has amassed by stealing from the country and Russians.

That is what we need to do. That is a powerful tool, which has yet to be used effectively, and it is part of what New Democrats are calling for, which is to apply real leverage and pressure to end what is going on in Ukraine, to end the violence and stop Putin from continuing to do it.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is an extremely serious time. I agree with most of what the NDP leader said, especially what he said about more targeted sanctions.

Does he think sanctions should be applied to Belarus to bring about the fastest, most conclusive results possible? That is what the Bloc Québécois believes. I would also like to know what he thinks about maintaining contact with embassies and ambassadors, as other parties have proposed.

● (1945)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, under normal circumstances, sanctions can be imposed and diplomacy can be used to send messages. In this case, however, it is clear that President Putin is not paying attention to such gestures. He only cares about money. That really is his weakness.

If we really want to help the Ukrainian people, who are suffering at the moment, the sanctions must hit President Putin by targeting the oligarchs and their wealth. That is how we can really put pressure on President Putin. Other tools, sanctions and efforts will unfortunately not work, because Putin does not care about normal things. On the other hand, if we target the oligarchs, we can put pressure on Putin and hit him where it hurts the most.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the NDP for his strong condemnation of the attack by Russia on Ukraine, his support of measures that will take the fight directly to Vladimir Putin, and his suggestion to take up some of the measures that I and my New Democrat colleagues have been suggesting for a long time to help Ukrainians get to Canada in an expedited fashion by, for example, eliminating the visa requirement.

We know that one component of Putin's attack on Ukraine very much has to do with disinformation and how Putin and the Russian administration under him have excelled at propagating disinformation through social media. We have felt the effects of that even here in Canada. We have known for a long time that part of the Russian strategy has been to decenter western democracies through disinformation. We are going to have to be very vigilant during the battle between Ukrainian forces and Russian forces to understand and appreciate the role of disinformation.

I wonder if the member has some thoughts on what government could do, and what individual Canadians could do, to fight against the propagation of disinformation on social media?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, it is true that we have already seen the impacts of the campaign of disinformation led by Russia to particularly target democracies. They do so by propagating messages, information and propaganda that are incorrect. They repeat the lines that Russia is encouraging people to believe. It is information designed to subvert democracies and incite hatred against different groups. In this case, it is against Ukraine.

We have seen clear, concerted attempts to incite hatred against Ukraine that are baseless, and we have seen propaganda that is baseless.

There is a couple of things that we could do. The first is to be very careful. When we see information, we should be very careful about the source and make sure it is a source that we trust, a source that has been verified before spreading any of its messages. There is a clear effort, and we will be targeted with disinformation.

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The second is that government has a strong role to play. We have seen, through a number of different accounts, including whistleblowers, that social media benefits from divisive rhetoric and comments, and they amplify messages that might divide people because, whether it is people criticizing that message or supporting it, it will keep more people on their platform.

Governments have to play a role in ensuring that disinformation is not spread and is not allowed to be spread. It cannot be left in the hands of social media companies, which would give those messages that are divisive and that create controversy more space and amplify them in people's feeds. That is why government has to take a role in stopping the spread of that information. It is something we have long called for.

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

I am proud to rise today during this take-note debate in the House of Commons to speak to Russia's military invasion of Ukraine. A couple of days ago, I was joined by several of my colleagues in requesting this emergency take-note debate in the House of Commons. We felt it was important to provide an opportunity for members of all parties from all parts of the country to speak to this issue and to discuss Canada's and the international community's response to what is happening in Ukraine. I would like to thank all parties for their support for the motion to have this emergency take-note debate.

During our last take-note debate I shared a story with all members about my grandfather, Yvan, and how I was with him when Ukraine declared its independence. He was a great patriot. When Ukraine declared its independence, it might have been the proudest day of his life. My grandfather said to me that day that, now Ukraine was independent, we would have to keep up the fight for Ukraine's independence. I was 14 years old at the time and I asked him what he was talking about. I thought Ukraine had declared its independence, as people wanted, and the world had recognized it. I said to him, "You are wrong." However, I was wrong.

In 2014, Russia twice invaded Ukraine and Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. In 2014, the world did not do enough. It did not impose enough sanctions. It did not send weapons. It did not do enough to support Ukraine and to deter an invasion. Now Vladimir Putin has begun an unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine. He has attacked the entire country, and not just the soldiers defending Ukraine's borders. He is targeting and killing civilians: men, women and children. He is bombing buildings. He is bombing kindergartens and much more. Civilians are dying as we speak.

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The courage of the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian armed forces has been inspiring. It is not just soldiers who are fighting courageously, it is men, women, people of all ages, seniors, are taking up arms. They are outnumbered and they are outgunned, but they keep fighting. They are holding the line against a much larger, much more well-armed military.

In Ukrainian we say, “*Slava Ukraini. Heroyam slava.*” This means glory to Ukraine and glory to the heroes. I think we can all agree that Ukrainians are living up to those words right now. For those of us with Ukrainian ancestry, this touches us personally, but this is something that concerns all Canadians. It is a humanitarian crisis. We see not just the soldiers being killed, but civilians being killed, as well as civilians being displaced and civilian communities being bombed. This is an attack on Ukraine's sovereignty, but it is also an attack on democracy in the international rules-based order. It is a threat not just to Ukraine's security, but to Europe's security, the world's security and Canada's security.

Ukrainians are fighting bravely, and they are fighting for their freedom. They are fighting for their homeland, but they are also fighting for something else. They are fighting for all of us. Today, this impacts all of us. This affects all our security. It affects democracy around the world. It affects global security.

Today, they are fighting for all of us. Today, we are all Ukrainian. Ukrainians are fighting for us, and we need to fight for them. That is why Canada and our allies must do everything possible to stop this invasion and to ensure Russia withdraws from Ukraine.

Canada has taken a tremendous number of steps along with our allies. Today, we banned crude oil exports. We announced that we are going to provide additional lethal weapons to Ukraine, anti-tank weapons, and other rockets and systems that Ukraine has requested. We will ask the CRTC to review RT's presence on our airwaves. We need to get rid of RT in Canada.

We have previously provided two shipments of lethal weapons. We trained over 30,000 Ukrainian soldiers, who are fighting so bravely as we speak right now, and we have imposed a tremendous number of sanctions against Vladimir Putin, his oligarchs and the central bank and much more. These sanctions are having a significant impact, but it will not be enough until Vladimir Putin stops, until Ukraine is free.

Today, the House unanimously supported my motion that called on Canada to do a number of things, including continuing to impose sanctions, the provision of additional support to the government of Ukraine and the Ukrainian armed forces, the issuing of an additional order for the CRTC about RT and broadcasting policy, and the removal of Russia from SWIFT and the payment system.

● (1950)

We have to keep working until we stop Vladimir Putin, until the Ukrainians win. They are fighting for us.

In 1991, on that day with my grandfather, I was wrong. In 2014, the world was wrong. There is too much at stake. Ukraine's security is Europe's security and is Canada's security. Ukrainians are fighting bravely for freedom, but they are also fighting for us, and we need to fight for them.

Today we are all Ukrainian. Today everyone in the free world is Ukrainian, and today we can all say *slava Ukraini, heroyam slava*.

Glory to Ukraine. Glory to the heroes.

● (1955)

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has a large Ukrainian community, with as many as 15% of the province's population tracing their roots back to Ukraine.

Last week the provincial Government of Saskatchewan sent a letter to this government, asking it to prioritize immigration applicants from Ukraine who have already applied under the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program as well as to fast-track refugee applications from Ukrainians bound for Saskatchewan.

Can the government commit to working closely with the provincial Government of Saskatchewan on these priority items so we can help as many Ukrainians as possible?

Mr. Yvan Baker: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his advocacy around helping those Ukrainians who are displaced and fleeing their country and need our help. Canada has an important role to play in making sure we support those who need our help, providing humanitarian assistance and also welcoming Ukrainians to Canada, where they can find refuge.

The Government of Canada has been working very closely with provincial governments and will continue to, I am sure. What the Government of Canada has shown to date, through the measures that have been announced over the last few days and today, is that we are taking every step possible to ensure we help facilitate Ukrainians coming to Canada, finding safety here and continuing to build this country, as Ukrainian Canadians have for generations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks.

This has been raised a few times today, and my colleague just mentioned it again, but I am not sure we have had a clear answer as to whether the government is considering waiving visa requirements for Ukrainians coming to Canada, whether on a temporary or permanent basis, since it is an emergency situation.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government has already demonstrated that it will work to support people who are fleeing war and Ukraine.

I hear the member's suggestion, and I thank him very much for that. I think it is vitally important that Canada do everything it can to bring Ukrainians who need out to Canada.

The government has already announced that we are doing this, and we will continue to work on it.

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his words in solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

Whether they are bringing their children to safety or fighting for freedom and democracy, Ukrainians are showing the world what courage looks like, and we have to support them. I have spoken to so many people in my community here in Victoria who are worried about their family members. Parents, grandparents, people with disabilities and people with young children are trying to get to safety and need to get here quickly. We know our immigration and refugee system is broken and extremely backlogged. We are witnessing this unfolding humanitarian crisis.

Can the member speak to the urgent need to provide more resources and measures to help those in need of support and resettlement who are fleeing Putin's violence? As well, does he agree that Canada should provide visa-free access to all Ukrainians?

Mr. Yvan Baker: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her intervention and her advocacy.

The humanitarian needs are tremendous. I actually asked a question of the minister about this today. Civilians are being killed as we speak. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, are being displaced and fleeing. There is a tremendous need for the world to do so much more to support those who are fleeing, and I certainly believe that to be the case.

As for allowing Ukrainians to come visa-free, those who look at my record will know about my advocacy of ensuring that closer people-to-people ties with Ukraine over the years. I will continue to do that. There is no time more important than now, when Ukrainians are in need and Canada can help. The government has done that and will continue to do that.

● (2000)

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many Canadians have a connection with Ukraine. There are a lot of new immigrants from Ukraine in Canada, and first and foremost my thoughts are with them, because they have immediate family and friends in Ukraine. I can certainly imagine what it is like for them every time they hear the phone ring, wondering who is calling and about what.

There are many other Canadians like me. I spent the first number of years of my life living with my parents and grandparents in a part of Fort William, which is now Thunder Bay and which has a large Ukrainian-Canadian population. My *baba* was from near Horodenka and my *dido*, or grandfather, was from Kamyanets-Podilskyy. I spent many summer evenings as a child sitting with my *baba* on the steps of her corner store, which actually was not on the corner, partly because *baba* used to brazenly bribe me with Fudgesicles and Creamsicles from the store in order to get me to sit with her. She would sit for hours singing old Ukrainian hymns and telling stories about what used to happen in the old country. That was in between going in and out of the store and selling people cigarettes and candy.

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Because so many of my early memories revolve around Ukraine and Ukrainians, even though I do not speak Ukrainian and even though I have only visited Ukraine once in my life, I feel very much that Ukraine is part of my soul.

Of course, people do not have to be Ukrainian in order to sympathize with what is happening in Ukraine or with Ukrainians. We all see the pictures, but the pictures are only a very small part of what is happening in Ukraine. Certainly, we have statistics, contested statistics, about the number of deaths and injuries, but let us remember what Joseph Stalin once said, which is that a million deaths is a statistic and one death is a tragedy. Certainly, for each statistic, every death is a tragedy; it means a phone call to a parent telling them a child will not be coming home or that a child will not have their parent coming home as they told the child they would.

All of this tragedy is the direct and total responsibility of Vladimir Putin and the people who support Vladimir Putin. It is Vladimir Putin who decided to walk in the steps of Joseph Stalin. Ukrainians and Russians are, in fact, brothers and sisters, but this is brother killing brother. The only brother who kills his brother is a madman like Putin, but let us not forget, in this immense human tragedy worthy of Dostoevsky, the suffering of many Russians as well, many of whom are dying fighting their brothers and sisters in Ukraine. Let us also not forget about the mothers and fathers of Russian soldiers who are anxiously awaiting their children's return from Ukraine.

As a doctor who has certainly dealt with death and has worked in places where I saw a lot of trauma, including close to war zones, I can absolutely tell members that the suffering of a parent losing a child or the suffering of a child losing a parent are exactly the same. It does not matter whether one is from Ethiopia, Haiti, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Ukraine or Russia.

In my allotted time I could have talked about more lofty issues, such as the fact that this invasion presents an existential threat to the international legal order, which it certainly does; how that international legal order grew, in no small part, out of the Second World War; and the fact that in so many ways the UN charter and international legal order were the result of the Second World War and the sacrifices so many Russians and Ukrainians made in that war. I also do not have too much time to talk about what we can and cannot do, other than to repeat what a number of people in our party have said, which is that all options remain on the table.

To my family in Ukraine, some of whom, as I speak, are waiting with guns for the Russians to come; to their parents who are worried and praying for them; to the people of Ukraine; to the very many good Russian people: I support you, my family supports you, the Canadian people support you, good people all around the world support you, and certainly this Parliament supports you.

Slava Ukraini.

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• (2005)

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the most effective tools that the world has at its disposal right now is to stop the imports of Russian oil and gas. I certainly will say that I do acknowledge and congratulate the government for stopping that from coming into Canada, but we also could, with our Canadian energy, be the replacement for that Russian oil and natural gas with our good, clean, environmentally responsible and friendly Canadian oil and gas.

Had the Liberal government only recognized those benefits of our energy as the environmentally friendly energy that it is, the ability to grow our economy and create jobs here in Canada, and the way that our energy respects human rights and would enable peace and security in the world by stopping dictators like Vladimir Putin from being the source of energy instead, we would have a much safer place. We would have a much stronger ability to go after the Russians for what they are doing in Ukraine.

Will the Liberal government finally get behind our oil and gas industry and stop preventing its success?

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Mr. Speaker, indeed hindsight is 20-20. I think most of us a month ago, two months ago, six months ago, would not have predicted that Putin would actually have gone into Ukraine.

As to the situation right now and whether we should cut off Russian supplies of oil and gas to Canada, I personally support that idea. However, the devil is always in the details. What is an alternative right now? We certainly do not want people to be unable to heat their houses or to see businesses closing down in Quebec because they do not have access to heat or oil. I think our government has already said and made clear that all options are on the table. This is certainly something we have to consider.

Certainly we need to go on an economic blitzkrieg against Russia. We have to go on multiple fronts against Russia just like Russia went against Ukraine. We ought to harm Russia economically however we can, whether it means imports, exports or financial connections, absolutely everything. We go after Russia.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Thunder Bay—Rainy River said something interesting. He said that the only brother who kills his brother is a madman. Well, a distant cousin who watches the brother kill his brother might also be described as a madman.

What does my colleague think about the possibility of imposing equally severe sanctions on Belarus as are being imposed on Russia?

[*English*]

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Mr. Speaker, the truth is that I personally had not considered what we are going to do with Belarus when I was in question period today. In fact, I admit that when the Bloc brought up Belarus, it caught me off guard, but I absolutely agree with the member.

I cannot speak for the government, but I agree that countries have to choose sides. It is the same with China: Choose a side. Ei-

ther be on the side of globalization and the right side or be on the wrong side. Belarus chose. It chose to be on Russia's side. Let it suffer the same consequences as Russia.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's speech and I thank him for his passion.

There is evidence that Russian forces have intentionally attacked civilians and civilian targets. I want to know his thoughts about how Canada can contribute to gathering evidence of possible war crimes and how we can hold the Russian military leadership to account and make sure they come to justice for the commission of any war crimes.

Secondly, I was incredibly moved by the thousands of Russian citizens in St. Petersburg and Moscow who risked brutal imprisonment to protest for peace. I am wondering if he can comment on that, because we need to isolate Putin but not go after the Russian people, many of whom want peace and did not want this war in the first place.

• (2010)

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, the Russian people are not our enemy. The enemy is Putin. There are very many good Russian people. There are many people in Russia who are suffering, seeing their kids going off to fight a war that they themselves do not want. Certainly they are on our side. They are not on Putin's side.

As for war crimes, I would take a step back further and even suggest this. What really galls me is the fact that Russia continues to sit on the Security Council and is the president of the proceedings dealing with what is happening in Ukraine. When they are part of the decision-making body in the UN, I think we have to fundamentally start looking at some of the underpinnings of the UN, including Russia, which is clearly not in favour of globalization and the world order, and its position in the international legal order.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House representing my home communities in Durham. The last time I rose in the House, on January 31, my speech was on Ukraine. A lot has changed since that speech, for me and where I sit in this chamber, but more important, and something that has had the world transfixed, is that our fears about a Russian invasion were actualized.

We have seen horrific videos of indiscriminate violence toward the civilian population by Mr. Putin and his Russian aggression. We have seen inspiring stories of parliamentarians, of elderly people and of people who had never held a rifle picking one up to defend their land, to defend their community and to defend their country. Our fears have been actualized. When I last rose in the House, I never thought we would see the extent of aggression we see.

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It is good to be back. I want to start by thanking all members of the House for their remarks tonight. It has been nice to see all sides coming together to stand up for our friends in Ukraine. I want to thank the government for moving on weapons for our allies in Ukraine. That was the subject of our debate a month ago. I want to thank the government for the aid that has been provided, the move alongside our allies to take Russia out of the SWIFT financial system, and the restrictions on airspace. There must be a full-court press of both diplomatic and security pressures brought to bear to halt this aggression and save lives. I want to thank the government, and I want to thank the Conservative opposition and all members of the House for this debate tonight.

I would also like to thank Canadians, business leaders, community and charity leaders across the country for stepping up, donating and doing drives to raise awareness and raise funds to help. Particularly, I want to thank the Ukrainian Canadian community, which has always inspired me, from my very first speech as a fledgling politician in the Dnipro Hall in Oshawa with members of the long-standing Ukrainian community there. The League of Ukrainian Canadians, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and charities and credit unions across this country are stepping up, and I know that it is providing hope.

The debate we have here tonight is one of unity because it is about the values we represent as a country: the commitment to liberty, to democracy and to the rule of law that we want to see our millions of friends in Ukraine have as well. It has been shocking to hear some of the stories. This morning, I heard an interview with a Ukrainian member of parliament. She is 37, and her name is Inna Sovsun. Speaking to a Canadian journalist, she said, "I'm so much better with words than with arms, but I will pick up arms if it comes to that".

We are so fortunate in the House that we never have to worry about going beyond our words. We see the president, and all sides of their parliament stepping up, inspiring and even taking up arms to defend their land. It is something. As Canadians, we have to act and be relevant within NATO, the United Nations, the G7 and the G20 to make sure countries such as Ukraine do not face this brazen aggression, this hostility of the highest order, or else we will become a world where politicians have to stop the words and pick up the arms. That is a scary notion. I want Ms. Sovsun to know that parliamentarians around the world, including here in Canada, are going to fight hard to make sure she can continue to fight with her words and her democracy and not have to resort to picking up arms.

In the spirit of co-operation, with my words of thanks I would like to provide two recommendations to the government in this debate.

● (2015)

[*Translation*]

It is an honour for me to be here as the member for my home communities. I am a proud veteran. We need our foreign policy to be based on our values as a country and as a society. That policy also needs to be focused on our allies and our friends around the world, including Ukraine.

[*English*]

There are two very specific recommendations that I would like to bring to the government's attention. The first is that we have to return to interest-based foreign policy. What are our interests, from an economic and trade standpoint? What are our diplomatic and humanitarian assistance interests as a nation? What are our security concerns? What are our defence alliances as a country?

We are one of the most multilateral countries in the world because we have always had to be, as a trading nation: a nation that straddles the northern half of the Americas, a nation born not of revolution, but of evolution from an empire. We now stand as one of the world's great democracies. We have to have our foreign policy not based on appealing to small groups or appealing to the issue of the day. We have to make it based on our strategic, long-term interests as a country and on our values as a country.

When the Deputy Prime Minister laid out the government's foreign policy approach in a speech in this place in 2017, she began her remarks with a question. She asked, "Is Canada an essential country at this time in the life of our planet?" The government then did not really lay out interests, but laid out a number of emerging issues. We have seen that repeatedly with progressive trade agendas, with climate change and other issues outflanking our economic, security, trade, diplomatic and humanitarian interests as a country.

That has to change because all issues are a priority, from climate change to some of the progressive trade agenda that was promoted with the United States, but our security as a country, and our relevance within NATO and within NORAD, are critical to what our country must advance. I would ask the government, in the spirit of co-operation we see here, to make sure that we have the equipment we need for our Canadian Armed Forces, and that we arm our diplomats and our aid workers with the tools and the funds they need to assert our interests and will around the world. We have been lulled into a sense of complacency.

The second recommendation I have relates to our Arctic. It is something that I have been talking about for many years. It is something that I was pleased to work on with Michael Levitt when he was chair of the foreign affairs committee. We conducted the most robust examination of our interests in the Arctic in a generation. It was titled, "Nation-Building at Home, Vigilance Beyond: Preparing for the Coming Decades in the Arctic".

The April 2019 report stated that, "The Arctic is a fundamental and indivisible part of Canada", and that when we wrote it our sovereignty was at risk. The first section of that report dealt with Russia's military and security buildup in its portion of the Arctic, Russian interest in the continental shelf and Russian interest in polar trade and circumnavigation routes.

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We are decades behind where we need to be in asserting our Arctic sovereignty. “We the north” should be more than a hashtag we use when we are proud of our basketball team. This defining element of our country right now is in jeopardy, so we need the ships, the drones, the personnel, the rangers and the infrastructure investments to realize the true potential of Canada and recognize that we are a neighbouring country to Russia.

Based on our national interests and a foreign policy based on that, we also have to help our friends in Ukraine. We need to provide that continued support through the winding down of the SWIFT financial system and with sanctions, including the Magnitsky sanctions brought in with the help of my friend for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman. We need to make sure that we have the military equipment needed for Ukraine to defend itself. We should work within NATO to see how we can use parameters, including looking at restricting the ability for Russia to inflict more damage, and then of course help with refugee support.

● (2020)

The 1.4 million Ukrainian Canadians have helped build this country. Canada was the first nation to recognize Ukraine.

Tonight, let us show, as parliamentarians, that we will continue to be one of the strongest, one of the most consistent and one of the most steadfast allies of Ukraine.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to see the hon. member back in the House. Some things my hon. colleague touched upon are actually going to be in what I say later today.

This gentleman, my colleague, has served in our Canadian Armed Forces. He has defended and protected our country, and I thank him for that.

My question is actually around the military presence. The United States and Canada have ruled out the idea of having Canadian troops in Ukraine. Of course, the minister of defence has said that we will mobilize 3,500 troops to support our NATO commitments.

The member served in that capacity. Could he give his thoughts to us, his colleagues in the House, about what point Canada has to mobilize beyond its initial 60,000? Are we at that point, in terms of our complement of Canadian Armed Forces, or do we have to be encouraging other Canadians that perhaps may take on the same profession that he did before he joined the House?

Hon. Erin O’Toole: Mr. Speaker, I know, that the hon. member has pride for the men and women who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces, as I do, particularly at CFB Greenwood. I was stationed at Shearwater and did a lot of training at that incredible air base.

I think all parliamentarians are proud of any Canadian who steps up to put a uniform of service on for their country, whether service at home, which we have seen particularly in British Columbia in recent months, or abroad.

We have also been steadfast, going back to the Conservative government, with operations such as Unifier and Reassurance. We have had great collaboration within NATO and particularly on training

operations in Ukraine and in the Baltics to make sure we have a presence.

I really do think that there has been a creeping barrage of aggression by Vladimir Putin and we have been lulled into a sense of complacency in the western world.

It started in 2014 with the Revolution of Dignity, which led Mr. Putin to go into Crimea and into the Donbass. We saw Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 shot down. We saw cyber-attacks in 2015 that took out part of the Ukraine energy grid. There has been a steadfast and consistent approach of aggression, and we had hoped that the post-war world order would not change. It has changed.

I know that member shares an interest in our Canadian Armed Forces. In the spirit of co-operation, we need a non-partisan plan to build out capacity for our Canadian Armed Forces and to exert control over our land mass in the Arctic. With regard to that, right now even our friends in the U.S. have stepped away from the relationship Mr. Mulroney and former president Reagan negotiated with respect to the Northwest Passage.

We must act now to help our friends in Ukraine, but also to make sure we defend our own territorial sovereignty.

● (2025)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member for Durham said that the last time he rose in the House was on January 31. I too rose on that day to speak to the issue of Ukraine.

At the time, the focus was on diplomacy. Many journalists had pointed out gaps in what was happening in government: high employee turnover, five different ministers in six years, no foreign policy white paper for at least 17 years. Are we at the stage where we need to revisit our diplomacy and use a much clearer, more structured approach?

Hon. Erin O’Toole: Mr. Speaker, I gave a speech in January about the situation in Ukraine before Mr. Putin’s invasion. Unfortunately, there is now an illegal war that contravenes international law.

Our country needs a new approach to foreign affairs. As I stated in my speech, our country needs a foreign policy focused on our economic, security and diplomatic interests. Our approach must also reflect our values as a democratic country that has compassion for the poor around the world.

The time has come to reinvigorate our policy. The time has come to work closely on our country’s interests, human rights and the plight of Ukrainians.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a serious question, and I hope the House can unite around how important it is to ensure that we have visa-free requirements for Ukrainians seeking safety. Several times today this question has been posed, and I really hope that we can get some unity on this tonight.

I would ask the member for Durham whether the Conservatives agree with the NDP's proposal, from at least 2018, to ensure that visa travel requirements for Ukrainians are waived.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, as this is the first time I have had the chance to respond to the new member for Edmonton Griesbach, I want to welcome him to the House. I remind him that the Conservatives have been asking for this for many years. My friend for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman whispered to me how many years and it has been four.

One thing I think we are very proud of in the House is the strong, deep, historical ties between Ukraine and Canada. We can facilitate those ties through parental, grandparent and family travel, through business relationships and through the free trade agreement that my friend, the hon. member for Abbotsford, helped negotiate. These are the indications of a mature and important relationship for our country.

I agree with the member, and I do think it is something we need. We also need to work with allies across Europe, particularly in Poland. We have seen 500,000 people already flee.

I want to speak for a moment about someone who works on the Hill who just moved here from Ukraine a couple of years ago. She is a friend, Daria Fesenko. I spoke to her a few days ago. All of her family is in eastern Ukraine, and they have had to hide out in the country away from the war being inflicted there. Daria is in contact with them every day, and like so many Ukrainian Canadians, she is worried about her family. That is why it is so nice to see the House come together tonight and so nice to see Canada assert itself alongside our allies. Whatever we can do to help in this time of crisis, we need to do.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this is an evening of remarkable consensus on all sides of the House in our support for Ukraine, its people and its brave and inspiring president.

I hate to find one small part of the member's speech to take up and ask him to rethink, but there was a notion, which he may not have meant to sound as strong as it did, that the government has spent too much time looking at things like climate change and needs to focus more on national security and the economy. Those are the same things: The climate crisis threatens national security and the economy, as a report that just came out today from the IPCC will further inform him.

I want to put to the member some words, which I think make it hard to say there is too much attention on climate change. They come from Dr. Svitlana Krakowska, who was the head at the IPCC delegation from Ukraine. Today she said, "Human-induced climate change and the war on Ukraine have the same roots—fossil fuels—and our dependence on them." She continued, "We will not surrender in Ukraine, and we hope that the world will not surrender in building a climate resilient future." These are consistent and convergent goals, not competing ones.

• (2030)

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I note the report I referenced in my remarks, and I invite the hon. member to consult the report

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that our committee did in 2019: "Nation-Building at Home, Vigilance Beyond: Preparing for the Coming Decades in the Arctic".

Climate change is part of preparing for the Arctic. In fact, at the request of the Conservatives, that foreign affairs report was the first report that a parliamentary committee prepared in the indigenous languages of the partners we met with on the ground. That was a Conservative request, because the resilience and vigilance we need to build in our Arctic are about not only the rangers for security, but also the impact of climate change, particularly on traditional ways of life.

The challenge I have with the government is that it will sometimes substitute these notions and ignore the hard-and-fast statecraft mechanisms we should have. The government completely ignored the need for us to be full partners in NORAD. That includes ballistic missile defence, and it means asserting our sovereignty in the Arctic and supplying ships to the Canadian Armed Forces. We have to look at the world the way it is, and that is what I hope tonight's debate can do. Let us make sure that Canada helps our friends in Ukraine, but let us also make sure we are prepared at home.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kings—Hants.

My time is short, so I will make some quick points.

Over the last week, the world around us has changed and we need to adapt. We need to change with it. Last week, people across the world were treated to two horrifying events that occurred at exactly the same time. The first is what we have been talking about tonight: Russian missiles dropping on innocent civilians in the Ukraine, an illegal act of aggression committed by Vladimir Putin and his regime against a sovereign, independent neighbour.

The second happened on our very continent in New York, where the Russian ambassador was chairing a meeting of the UN Security Council. The meeting was to discuss a resolution condemning Russian aggression against Ukraine, and after denying that Russia ever intended to invade Ukraine, the ambassador was confronted during the meeting with news that missiles were dropping on Ukraine from Russian territory. The Russian ambassador was then allowed to continue to chair the meeting, to which his country was the named party, and then when his country was the only one to vote against the resolution, he was able to veto it.

My first point is that the United Nations badly needs reform. Whether it is the Security Council or the Human Rights Council, where dictatorships that abuse human rights sit in judgment of democracies, we need to reform this organization.

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My second point is that we need to hold Vladimir Putin, those around him in his regime, his military commanders and those who support this aggression to account. That means we need to find a way to ensure that we let Vladimir Putin know that he will be brought before an international tribunal. The problem is that this international tribunal would be the International Criminal Court, and Russia has not acceded to the Rome Statute. Therefore, in my understanding, this would require a referral from the Security Council, where Russia would hold a veto. Coming back to my first point, we need to reform that organization.

We all have been so incredibly proud to watch the resolve of the Ukrainian people. My heart goes out to all those suffering there and to the Ukrainian Canadian community. I am also part of a diaspora, and I think one needs to be part of a diaspora to fully understand the pain when one's ancestral homeland is attacked, no matter how many generations prior our ancestors were there. My heart goes out to those Canadians. My heart also goes out to the Ukrainians who are standing up not only for their democracy and freedom, but for ours and the democracy of the world. Canadians can be inspired and learn from Ukrainians.

My third point is that nobody in Ukraine today is asking who they voted for in the last election or whether they believe in vaccine mandates. People are pulling together against a real threat to their country. We can use this example as a stark reminder that there are a lot of threats to Canada and the world and we need to pull together and stop being divisive. We as members of Parliament can set the example that we can disagree with people without disliking or hating them. We all believe in a strong, united Canada. We are all here to defend our country, and we need to pull together.

For the last number of years, we have had warning signs of real threats to the world order: the rise of authoritarian strongman regimes, Russia's annexation of Crimea, repression by China in Hong Kong and its threatening actions in the South China Sea, the rise of Donald Trump and the rise of isolationism in the most powerful democracy in the world. The attack on Ukraine is a culmination of this and we need to rise to the challenge.

My next point is that in this battle, Ukraine is our friend and ally and Putin is not. There are not two sides to this. We need to fully support Ukraine. We need to do everything we can to make sure that the economy of Russia is absolutely destroyed so that Putin's act of aggression ends and he is replaced. I have been very proud of how Canada has led in this regard.

My last point is that we need to seriously look at increasing defence spending. I understand that military spending is not popular, but we are now faced with a world order that is changing and with new challenges posed by cybersecurity and disinformation. Russia is our neighbour in the Arctic, and we need to seriously consider whether we are prepared to confront this new world.

● (2035)

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Chair, Vladimir Putin needs to understand that his invasion of Ukraine is totally unacceptable, and Russia needs to become a pariah on the world stage, just like North Korea.

Will the government expel the Russian ambassador to Canada and at the same time recall Canada's ambassador to Russia?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chair, as the hon. member knows, I do not speak for the government on this issue. However, in my view, that would depend on whether or not we believe the Canadian ambassador in Russia, who would clearly be expelled if we expelled the Russian ambassador, is able to find things out on the ground that we need to know. I have no personal objection to strongly considering the expulsion of the ambassador, but I think there are other things we need to do that are far more important, such as making sure that sanctions are imposed in the strongest manner against Russia and making sure there is so much pressure that Russians try to overthrow Putin. Finally, I am in agreement that Russia should not be part of international organizations as long as the Putin regime is in place.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague from Mount Royal for his speech.

I listened carefully to my colleague and I heard him say the word “cybersecurity”. In the past few days, Aluminerie Alouette, which is based in Sept-Îles, was the victim of an attack and it is suspected that Russia was involved.

Is the government prepared to face this type of attacks? What will it do in future?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chair, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Yes, the government is prepared. The Minister of National Defence answered a question today about cybersecurity. We absolutely recognize that we must protect government bodies but also all bodies and institutions across the country.

Russia is absolutely engaging in cyber-attacks and we must be prepared. That is why, yesterday, I proposed increasing funding so we can better deal with these kinds of situations.

● (2040)

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Chair, it is great to see MPs across party lines united in their support for Ukraine and united in their condemnation of Putin. That is not the case everywhere. The member mentioned Donald Trump in his speech. It is appalling to see the former U.S. president praising Putin.

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Putin's government has a track record of using disinformation to target democracies. My question is about how disinformation has been used by Putin and by his regime to destabilize, to undermine support for Ukraine and to justify this unjustifiable war. Could the member speak to what the government needs to do to combat disinformation online, on social media and in our communities?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chair, we need to make sure that platforms are held accountable for driving traffic to disinformation. We have seen, over and over, that platforms seek to monetize and make revenue and make sure that people stay on platforms for as long as possible. Hate is driven to hate, and people who believe in one world theory are driven to other conspiracy theories that they would agree with, keeping them on a platform longer. We need to make sure that platforms are not allowed to continue to do that.

We also need to make sure that disinformation is not only flagged but removed when it poses a threat to a nation's security. I think Russia has been the most culpable, but there are other foreign threats in this regard, and we need to take this very seriously.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Chair, I thank the member for Mount Royal for his always unifying tone.

One thing we have heard tonight from a lot of parliamentarians is the call to waive visa requirements for those fleeing violence. I wonder if the member would mind sharing his personal views on the importance of doing so.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chair, I think it would be appropriate to thank Poland and all the neighbouring countries around Ukraine for taking in so many refugees. We certainly have to make it easy for Ukrainians who are seeking a temporary or permanent solution to come to Canada. I am certainly open to any suggestions that would make it easier for Ukrainians to come to Canada.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Chair, it is an absolute privilege to be here tonight, albeit I just have five minutes to talk about a subject that is much more nuanced than time allows. I will try to make my remarks proportionate to what we have seen.

I would like to thank the member for Etobicoke Centre and other colleagues in the House who pushed for this debate. It is extremely important and timely that we are having it right now. I will join the chorus of my colleagues in the House, indeed individuals around the world, in condemning and denouncing Russia's egregious attack on Ukraine. It is unjust. It is unprovoked. Indeed it is against international law.

This is the largest mobilization of state-to-state warfare we have seen in Europe in decades. It marks a very nuanced and challenging point vis-à-vis the Cold War. I am 31 years old. I was born in 1991, right at the time the Soviet Union was collapsing, and this of course is very pronounced in the last 31 years that we have seen this.

The images have been horrific. I do not know if words give justice to what we have seen. It has been horrific but also inspirational at the same time. It is horrific in the sense that we have seen civilians killed. We have seen beautiful, peaceful cities which just a few days ago were not dealing with this now being bombarded with Russian missiles and bombs and with soldiers on the ground. It is beautiful in the sense of how we have seen the Ukrainian people come together in their resistance under the leadership of President

Zelenskyy. Everyday Ukrainians are banding together in such a unified fashion to fight for their democracy and their freedom. It is truly, in every sense, incredible and inspiring.

I am going to take a quick moment to talk about the Government of Canada's response. It would be difficult to find someone in this House who does not support what the government has done to date. Indeed, there are calls for us to do more, which are warranted.

As the situation continues to evolve, we will continue to need to do even more for the Ukrainian people, whether it be providing lethal and non-lethal weapons or imposing economic sanctions, which we saw today are continuing to have an impact on the Russian Federation. The price of the ruble is dropping significantly. The fact that we have worked to limit the central bank from having any access to SWIFT and those global payments is doing important work. It will not change the dynamic overnight, but it will be an important piece.

I want to take the last two minutes I have to talk about the fact that not only do we need to continue to support Ukraine but we also need to recognize this is a change in foreign policy around the world. As I mentioned previously, this is the end of the post Cold War period. No one has a crystal ball to see where things may go, but the fact that Russia and China signed an agreement just four weeks ago, the fact that China did not vote against the Russian invasion as being contrary to the principles under the United Nations signals and access, should have all parliamentarians and Canadians mindful of that dynamic from a geopolitical sense.

Like other colleagues have done, I want to provide some recommendations that I think will be important for all us as parliamentarians, and indeed the government, to consider in the days ahead.

One is looking at Canada's propensity to feed and fuel the world. I come from a riding that is agriculture based. We have a tremendous capacity to feed not only Nova Scotians but also people around the world. How can we start to incorporate that into Canada's foreign policy by providing healthy, sustainable food particularly to our allies? If those trading relationships change over time, we should be at the front line of making sure we are providing that, similar to what was done eight decades ago during World War II.

We have to be mindful of our defence spending. I asked the member for Durham earlier for his thoughts on mobilization. It is probably early yet for that conversation, but we do need to be mindful of making sure our military, our Canadian Armed Forces, are available and ready.

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I would agree with my colleagues who talked about the Arctic, whether it be for reasons of climate change, infrastructure, economic opportunities or our sovereignty. That will be an important piece.

I wish I had more time. Five minutes is short for a conversation of this gravity and as nuanced as this one is, but I look forward to taking questions from my colleagues.

● (2045)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his speech and his sensitivity. We can see he is concerned, as are all of us here in the House.

My colleague said that the government is prepared to do more. A number of solutions have been mentioned this evening, including expanding the sanctions to Belarus.

I would like to know whether there have been talks with our partners to implement these sanctions as quickly as possible, in order to hurt everyone in the enemy camp. People who have taken Russia's side are no less guilty of these acts of aggression.

Also, how can we better target wealthy Russian oligarchs, in an effort to hit the Russian president even harder?

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his question.

I think it is totally reasonable for our government to consider measures and economic sanctions against Belarus. Belarus is just as guilty, since it helped Russia attack Ukraine.

I think this discussion will continue in the House and I agree with the principle of the question.

[*English*]

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Chair, this is an important debate we are having this evening.

In the last few days we have seen the spirit of people in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country stand strong in making their voices heard in support for Ukraine.

I want to be clear that Vladimir Putin has created this invasion and human tragedy. It is not the people of Russia.

Central Okanagan is home to about 14,000 people of Ukrainian descent, myself included. I have been in touch with the Ukrainian leaders in my community and one of their asks is to immediately implement visas. As the official opposition, as Conservatives, we have actually taken it a step further and have recommended that on travel from Ukraine to Canada we eliminate visas.

Would the hon. member be in support of that?

● (2050)

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Chair, first of all, one of the points the member raised in her intervention was the fact that there is a separation between the regime in Russia and the Russian people. We have seen that in the demonstrations in cities across Russia. I want to go on record as saying we have to separate the Russian regime from the Russian people.

As to her question on immigration, I know our minister, as he mentioned today in the House, is exploring all options. I do not pretend to be privy to the information that he might have in cabinet, but I know that we will be exploring all avenues for Ukrainians who want to come to Canada to be able to get here. Any process to expedite that I certainly support.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Chair, we have heard a lot of questions and replies about what Canada can do. We have heard from the Conservatives that we should stop importing Russian oil, which we do not do now anyway.

I am wondering what the member would think about having the Canada pension plan divest itself of many very questionable investments many of which relate to Russian oligarchs. That money is used to create war. I am wondering if he could respond to that. My colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford put forward a private member's bill in the last Parliament and it is something that the government should act on.

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Chair, the pension board is independent of government, but I think now is the time for government to be looking at all tools available to limit the ability for Russia, for Putin, for the oligarchs to finance the war that we are seeing in Ukraine. If that were something that was available and there were ties, that is something the government could look at, particularly given the circumstances that we are seeing right now.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will share my time with the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[*English*]

The attack on Ukraine by the Russian Federation, ordered by President Vladimir Putin, is the first European war since the Second World War and a serious violation of international law and our collective humanity. This attack threatens not only Ukraine, but also Canada, because our security has always been inextricably tied to that of Europe. Canadians know well the price we paid in two world wars in Europe. A hundred thousand Canadian war dead can attest to that.

This attack, coming on the heels of an autocratic pact between the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, threatens the rules-based international order that has existed since 1945, an order that Canada helped establish. It is an order that has ensured the longest period of relative peace and prosperity in the modern period. It is an order that, if dissolved, threatens Canada's peace and security here at home.

We support the actions taken to date by the Government of Canada, but more needs to be done. The government should expel Russian Ambassador Oleg Stepanov and recall Canadian Ambassador LeClaire from Moscow. It should seek Russia's removal from multilateral fora such as the G20 and OSCE.

Diplomatic isolation is needed because diplomacy did not work. In fact, President Putin used diplomacy for his own purposes to disinform and distract.

The government should direct the CRTC to adopt a new policy to terminate licences of state-controlled broadcasters that spread disinformation and propaganda, so that Russia Today, RT, can be removed from Canadian airwaves, as should other authoritarian state-controlled broadcasters operating here in Canada. We must get serious about the disinformation and propaganda spread by proxies of Russia and China here in Canada.

The government should also immediately implement visa-free travel for Ukrainians wanting to come to Canada, as member states of the European Union already have done.

We must be clear-eyed about these proposed measures. We must be clear-eyed that these proposed measures are not going to stop the invasion in Ukraine. We must be clear-eyed that the measures announced to date by the Government of Canada are not going to stop the invasion in Ukraine. We must be clear-eyed that a middle power like Canada can only do certain things to counter the threat from Vladimir Putin and the Russian Federation. If we are clear-eyed, there are two things we can do.

First, we must understand that energy is vital not only to our economy, but also to our security. Russia understands this. Canada has not. Russia supplies 40% of Europe's natural gas and uses this to intimidate Europe and Ukraine, threatening to cut off supplies. If supplies are cut, people will freeze, factories will shutter and Europe's economy will plummet.

Canada is the fifth-largest natural gas producer in the world, but we cannot get gas to Europe to assist European democracies, because we cannot get pipelines built. Getting natural gas to Atlantic tidewater is vital not only to our economic interest, not only to our environmental interest, but it is also vital to our security interest. We were an arsenal for European democracy decades ago. We can be energy for European democracy today.

We must understand that Russia considers the Arctic its most important region. It has spent considerable resources there in recent years. Canada, like Ukraine, shares a border region with Russia, the Arctic Ocean. We no longer can afford to take our security for granted. We need a robust plan to defend Canadian Arctic sovereignty and security that includes purchasing F-35 jets, modernizing NORAD's early warning system, fixing our national ship-building program, joining ballistic missile defence, and closer cooperation with Scandinavian and American allies in the Arctic region.

The world has irreversibly changed in the last week. We must get serious about the threats presented by China and Russia. That starts with treating energy as vital not only to our economy, but also to our security, and treating seriously the Arctic as crucial to our sovereignty and to our security.

● (2055)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I know the member for Wellington—Halton Hills is a man who is deeply concerned with

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foreign policy. What I have remarked upon is the pace at which the international community has moved on this issue, in particular in changing from previously established positions.

I am going to point him to the example of Germany. We have seen, in a matter of very short days or weeks, Germany's rejecting the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, Germany's moving to actually fund weapons being delivered by its nation to another foreign nation in Europe, and Germany's backing the elimination or removal of Russia from the SWIFT system of economic exchanges.

I want to ask him about his view of the role of Canada in prompting that kind of multilateral co-operation and how we can keep that level of multilateral co-operation with NATO and other allies alive and well, going forward, once we get past this crisis and get Putin out of Ukraine.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, the most important role that Canada can play is to bring members of the NATO alliance more closely together. The single biggest threat that has created gaps between the positions of the various members of the alliance is energy. Russia has used energy as a weapon, as a hard power tool, to cow and intimidate central European democracies, particularly democracies like Italy and Germany, into not taking certain positions in defence of our collective security and our collective defence with the threat of cutting off the 40% of natural gas that Europe uses to heat homes, power industry, produce fertilizer for agriculture and so many other things.

If we in this country can understand that energy is essential not only to the economy but also to our security and get pipelines built to Atlantic tidewater, we can help replace Russian gas in western Europe with Canadian natural gas and bring the alliance more closely together. That is one of the two most significant things we can do to strengthen our collective defence and security.

● (2100)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chair, I always enjoy listening to my colleague. I would like to go off on a bit of a tangent, though my question is related to this evening's topic.

Many observers of the conflict are pondering whether the international response to the invasion of Ukraine could end up deterring or encouraging China's designs on Taiwan. Should we keep that in mind as we analyze the conflict in Ukraine?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I think China is watching us and our allies very closely right now to see what we do in response to Russian aggression in eastern Europe.

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[English]

The actions taken by western democracies today are going to dictate the actions of the People's Republic of China for years to come in the Indo-Pacific region. That is why we have to get serious about our foreign policy. We have to get serious about our defence policy, and we have to get serious about our energy policy. If we are clear-eyed about these interests, I think we can defend our values both here and abroad: our belief in freedom, human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, to hear the member talk about Canada's energy, one would think that the Canadian government is in a position to decide whom we export to and whom we import from. In fact, the free market in energy means that the government does not make those decisions.

I wonder, when the member talks about a more strategic approach to Canada's energy sector, if he means actually having some direction from government about whom Canadian oil producers sell to and whom Canadian consumers buy from.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, our energy is vital not just to our economic interests and not just to our security interests, but to our environmental interests. The single thing that the world could do in the next decade to meet our Paris targets and to reduce global emissions is to replace coal-fired electricity generation with natural gas-fired electricity generation. It is the single biggest step we can take to reduce global emissions.

European countries, many of them in western Europe, still rely on coal and gas to fire their electricity plants. We should be working to replace that with natural gas, a more environmentally friendly way to produce electricity in the transition to a renewable, non-emitting future.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Chair, I rise in the House this evening to add my voice to those of millions around the world who now see just how dangerous Vladimir Putin is.

I spent years in the Canadian Forces learning the structure of the Warsaw pact by heart, studying and memorizing Soviet tactics, learning to recognize vehicles, such as T-80s, BRDM-1s and BMPs, and various types of aircraft. I can say for sure that one thing I hoped for all those years was to never come up against the red army.

In the 2000s, international terrorism became the enemy. All the while, Vladimir Putin was getting ready.

I would like to start with a quote from Steve Rosenberg, the BBC's Moscow correspondent who said, "Many times I've thought: 'Putin would never do this.' Then he does it. 'He'd never annex Crimea.' He did. 'He'd never intervene in the Donbas.' He did. 'He'd never launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.' He has."

He added that he has concluded that the phrase "would never do" does not apply to Vladimir Putin, and that raises an uncomfortable question: He would never press the nuclear button first, would he? This is not a theoretical question. Putin has just put his country's

nuclear forces on special alert, complaining of "aggressive statements" about Ukraine by NATO members.

It is not playing petty politics or partisan political games to be worried about this situation. Now more than ever, we need to come together as a country to ensure that Canada plays its part with its allies. Canada is not and never has been a military superpower, but we can still exert influence to pressure Putin to back down and withdraw from Ukraine.

In the short term, we can and should declare the Russian ambassador to Canada, Oleg Stepanov, *persona non grata* and expel him from Canada. We should recall Canada's Ambassador LeClaire from Moscow and bring her home. Canada should isolate Russia internationally by seeking to remove it from organizations such as the G20 and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Canada should also implement a visa-free travel system between Ukraine and Canada.

Vladimir Putin is a dangerous man. He has long shown us that he is ready to do anything to hold onto and increase his power. After all, early in his career, he worked as a KGB officer for 16 years. It is not for nothing that every one of his critics dies under suspicious circumstances.

In the long term, Canada can truly be a superpower in our own way to our friends in Europe. For example, we must build new pipelines that reach the east coast to replace Russian natural gas. Russia provides 40% of Europe's natural gas and uses that to intimidate Europe and Ukraine, by threatening to cut off the supply. If that supply is cut off, people will freeze, European industry will cease to function and Europe's GDP will collapse. Now that the Russians have invaded Ukraine, the Liberal government may finally acknowledge that Canadian oil and gas are essential to the security of Canada and Europe. Let us open our eyes to that reality.

It is also time to take Canada's Arctic security and sovereignty seriously. Russia shares the waters to the northwest of Canada. We can no longer allow ourselves to take our peace and security for granted. The government must propose a solid plan for the Arctic that will help modernize NORAD's early warning system, improve the ailing military procurement system, speed up the national shipbuilding program, buy F-35 fighter jets, and work in close collaboration with the Scandinavian countries and the United States to ensure peace and security in the Arctic.

In closing, we must equip the Canadian Forces to a professional level with equipment worthy of the 2020s. Let us build our capabilities so we can be proud and effective.

● (2105)

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his speech. I would like to hear his thoughts on a very specific question.

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All day, the Conservatives have been saying that we need to build pipelines to supply Germany and other countries, as a way to sanction Russia. We all hope that the war will be over very soon.

Once peace talks start, will my colleague call for an end to construction on pipelines that are not yet finished?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, I see where my colleague is going. I think we need to open our eyes to what is going on in Europe and Russia. The Russian threat was there before, but people were reluctant to really acknowledge it. We see it now.

Canada has natural resources. Yes, we must combat climate change, but in the coming years, we will still need natural gas, a resource that happens to be much cleaner than coal-fired plants.

Europe would benefit from more Canadian natural gas to replace coal. That benefits everyone and the planet. We, and especially Europe, must cut ties with Russia. This would benefit Canada economically and would help Europe.

[*English*]

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I presume the member opposite would share my view that we have all been quite amazed and share admiration for the courage and strength of the Ukrainian people and for the leadership of their president, President Zelenskyy. When offered an exit strategy out of Ukraine, he responded, “I need ammunition, not a ride”. That was his response to the Americans. That was President Zelenskyy.

In response to that kind of plea, what we have seen on the side of the Canadian government is that it provided defensive equipment and lethal armaments of \$7.8 million, and just today the minister announced that 100 anti-tank weapons and 2,000 rockets were being provided.

I know the member opposite is a defence critic and very knowledgeable on this file. Can he comment on what that kind of lethal aid provision represents as a precedent for Canada and how it bodes for Canadian future military policy in aid of our allies around the world fighting against bold-faced aggressors engaging in unlawful acts, such as Vladimir Putin?

• (2110)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, I do know a little about this because I have operated various anti-tank weapons, among others.

I would like to remind my colleague that the Conservative Party has been asking for several months that Canada provide weapons to Ukraine. Before the invasion, people were too scared to say the words “lethal weapon”. However, now that Ukraine is under direct attack by Russia, no one is afraid to use these words.

At a bare minimum, Canada could have helped Ukraine by providing anti-tank weapons, C7 rifles, C6 and C9 machine guns, sniper rifles and ammunition. That is all that is needed to wage war. The Conservative Party has been saying for a long time that Canada must support Ukraine by sending it the weapons that we have avail-

able. I am pleased that we are doing so. We must continue to do so and to provide what we can.

We must also think of the Canadian Armed Forces, which have an urgent need for equipment here at home to defend our country if required.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Chair, I spoke to some of my constituents recently on Thursday and Friday. Many of them were concerned with IRCC in light of the crisis. We have said that while prioritizing permanent residency applications and travel documents for Ukraine is a necessary measure, the Liberals must not repeat the mistakes that were made with the Afghanistan humanitarian crisis. They must ensure this work is done properly with new staffing, resources and immigration levels so that the existing significant backlog for all streams within IRCC is not further impacted.

Does the member agree that the government should be allocating new resources to IRCC in order to process these new applications?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, that is actually a major and recurring problem at the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. The government wanted to bring 40,000 Afghan refugees to Canada, but it barely managed to bring 5,000 to 6,000. We have just learned that the Taliban has decided that no one else will be leaving Afghanistan. It is impossible.

It will now take resources and, above all, a sense of urgency. Everyone in the House of Commons has this sense of urgency. Therefore, I am asking the government to instill this sense of urgency in the public service so that everyone will work more quickly and react like the people in Europe are doing in wartime. Our contribution to the war effort is to help as many as people as possible by picking up the pace.

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will be sharing my time with my good friend, the member for Ottawa West—Nepean.

I rise tonight with a heavy heart for the Ukrainian people whose nation has been invaded by a savage dictator and for all those who value democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Like all my colleagues in the chamber, I am seeing the images coming out of Ukraine. I am watching missiles explode, and Russian tanks and soldiers swarm over places I know and communities of people I have met.

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I was an election observer in 2004 stationed in the Luhansk region of Ukraine, only 60 kilometres from the Russian border. This was the first round of the Ukrainian presidential election, rife with interference from Putin and the Russian state, which eventually led to Ukrainians rising up in the Orange Revolution and the election of Viktor Yushchenko in the final round of voting.

I saw first-hand the massive police presence around polling stations and the indisputable evidence of election fraud. I also experienced the kindness of local Ukrainian citizens at the polling stations I visited, and I witnessed their belief that they were participating in an important moment in their country's history.

Years later, Putin began waging a covert war in the same region of Luhansk, as well as in the Donbass, costing the lives of 17,000 Ukrainians. Since that time as an election observer, I have travelled to cities like Zaporizhzhia and Kherson on missions to help Ukraine strengthen its health care systems, where tanks now roll over the black soil of the countryside, which reminds me so much of my home province of Manitoba.

I have spent time in the beautiful capital of Kyiv on that iconic square known as the Maidan in the aftermath of the revolution of dignity, which cost so many Ukrainian youths their lives. My mother's family have their roots in the Lviv region, where young people in their late teens and twenties are now brandishing firearms to fight for their homeland. Like so many in the House today, I am heartbroken about what those families and friends are going through, huddled in basements or subways, fleeing the country, or taking up arms to defend their homeland.

Ukrainians have been fighting Russian aggression for centuries. They have been through some of the darkest times in history. Yes, there will be dark days ahead. However, what I know is that the Ukrainian people have an indomitable spirit, an undying love for their country, their culture and their freedom. They have always prevailed and will prevail again.

Let us be clear. Vladimir Putin's latest act of war on a sovereign nation is not only an attack on Ukraine, but an assault on the rules-based order that has kept global scale conflict at bay for 80 years. It is an attack on democracy itself here in Canada and around the world, and so we must take a stand.

We, with our allies, are indeed taking a stand. Vladimir Putin strives to divide NATO, but he has, in fact, given NATO a renewed sense of purpose and of unity. With the voices of nationalism and populism so loud around the world these days, it may seem that there are few who are willing to defend liberal democracy with their whole hearts, but the people of Ukraine are showing us all that those values of freedom and an open society are worth fighting and even dying for.

The question for us here today is: What will we do to help them? The government has taken strong measures to help Ukraine in concert with our allies and NATO partners. Our government authorized the provision of lethal weapons, which arrived in full and on time, and more are coming. Humanitarian assistance and support for refugees is on its way. As of yesterday, Canada's airspace is closed to all Russian aircraft operators. Alongside our allies, we have an-

nounced three sets of severe and coordinated sanctions on Russia and Belarus.

We will continue to impose severe, coordinated economic sanctions, as we call on Russia to reverse course, withdraw its forces and choose diplomacy. Our resolve to uphold the rules-based international order and to support the security of Ukraine, Europe and the world is unwavering.

I wish to end with these words from Mahatma Gandhi. He said:

When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants, and murderers, and for a time they can seem invincible, but in the end they always fall. Think of it... always.

Slava Ukraini. Heroyam slava.

• (2115)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Chair, many stakeholders have called for the expulsion of the Russian ambassador from Canada. I am wondering if the hon. member could give us his thoughts on that measure.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Chair, I heard a number of ministers say today that all options are on the table.

Sometimes, we need to talk to our enemies. I know that is a measure our foreign affairs minister will consider carefully. I trust her judgment to make the right decision.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his speech. I would like him to tell us about the humanitarian aspect of this war.

From the bits of information we have been getting, we know that the Ukrainian people are holding the line and protecting their cities thanks to their extraordinary courage and amazing ability to mobilize.

Those cities are currently under siege, however, which raises the spectre of a humanitarian crisis. I would like to know how the government plans to get help to people on the ground. Can it work with the Red Cross, perhaps?

At this point, I would like to ask if the government is planning to raise the \$10-million cap for matching donations to the Red Cross.

My priority is really the humanitarian crisis in the cities. What is the government planning to do about that?

• (2120)

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Chair, as the member mentioned, our Minister of International Development made an announcement that Canada would match up to \$10 million of humanitarian aid. I think he also heard, and we are going to hear from the parliamentary secretary shortly, that he was open to increasing that amount.

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The Ukrainian Canadian Congress, through the Canada-Ukraine Foundation has issued an appeal. We are all working in our communities to raise money for Ukraine.

While I have the floor, I want to say that I was at a rally in Winnipeg with 5,000 Winnipeggers, Ukrainian Canadians and non-Ukrainian Canadians, standing up for Ukraine, all pledging to help Ukraine on the humanitarian side, on the military side and on the sanction side.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Chair, I want to thank the member for his speech and for standing in solidarity with the courageous people of Ukraine as they fight for their freedom and for democracy.

I asked about visa-free access before, and I did not get a clear answer from the government, so I will ask again. Ukrainians do not require visas to travel to 141 countries, including most European countries. The NDP has been calling for visa-free access for Ukrainians for the past four years. Does the member agree that Canada should offer visa-free travel to Ukrainians? What does the member think is behind the government's hesitancy to offer this to the people of Ukraine?

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Chair, I want to thank the member for Victoria, who I serve on the environment committee with, for standing with Ukraine.

We heard the immigration minister stand up in the chamber today and again say that a number of these things are under consideration. We should do everything in our power to help people in danger make it to our shores. We have 180,000 people of Ukrainian extraction and ancestry in the community of Winnipeg. I know that we can welcome them with open arms. Here, they could be in touch with their culture, their language and their religion, and they would find a safe home in Winnipeg.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Chair, it is with sadness, alarm and great resolve that I stand in the House today to speak at a moment in history when our words and actions will have great impact. I had hoped to never be in a position to speak about war in the chamber, but in the face of open aggression by Putin's Russia, which is undermining decades of peace brought about by the post-World War II international rules-based order, Canada must do everything in its power to stop this.

[*Translation*]

The Russian attack on Ukraine is also an attack on democracy, international law, human rights and freedom. These actions will not go unpunished. We continue to support Ukraine.

[*English*]

We have all been watching heart-wrenching scenes of civilians being targeted and killed, fleeing their homes, taking refuge in subway tunnels and stepping up bravely to fight for their country and for freedom in Ukraine. These are scenes we hoped we would never again see in Europe. We have heard interviews with Ukrainian civilians who have expressed a sense of shock and disbelief that something like this could happen in Europe in 2022 and that it could happen in full view of the world. Most of them, like us, grew

up in a generation that has never known war. It seems unthinkable to them, but the unthinkable has become reality.

Before entering politics, I worked in the former Yugoslavia. When I was 29 years old, I spent a year in Bosnia and Herzegovina, just a few years after the Dayton peace accords. I grew up like most Canadians, thinking of war as something that happened to our grandparents and that could never happen to us. I took peace, democracy and freedom for granted.

While working in Sarajevo, it was my peers, my friends who were then in their twenties, who had been at the front line. Eventually, my colleagues and friends started opening up to me about their experiences. They were women who had been raped, who had watched their fathers and brothers taken away at gunpoint and then shot and left in mass graves. They were young people who would go out for bread and be shot by snipers. They told me of atrocities that I cannot repeat in the House.

At the age of 29, I stopped being sheltered by a false sense that war is something of another time and another place. I lost my sense of innocence about what humanity is capable of doing to one another and the comfort that comes from a veneer of civilization, which I came to know is incredibly thin. My friends in Sarajevo were European students. They never imagined that they would see war. In fact, they told me that when they marched in the streets and their own army, the Yugoslav national army, took aim and started shooting at them. They did not run because they did not believe it was really happening. I am seeing the same incredulity on the faces of Ukrainians today.

We cannot abandon them because peace is not inevitable. Peace takes constant vigilance and sometimes peace means fighting to stop war crimes and aggression and horrors from spreading. If we let it happen in Ukraine, what does the world do when Russia comes for our north, or when other dictators learn lessons from Ukraine? We cannot allow the unthinkable to happen just because we cannot imagine it. We must do everything to stop it right here, right now.

From the beginning, the Canadian government has stood resolutely with Ukraine. We have responded with all the tools at our disposal, through diplomacy, leadership, the UN and our allies, and through sanctions targeting Putin and his inner circle, the oligarchs, Russian banks and the SWIFT financial system. We are cancelling all export permits to Russia, banning imports of Russian crude oil, offering over \$620 million in sovereign loans to Ukraine, renewing and expanding the Canadian Armed Forces support to NATO through Operation Reassurance and Op Unifier, delivering lethal and non-lethal aid to civilians displaced and harmed in this illegal war, closing Canadian airspace to Russia and expediting immigration avenues for Ukrainians to settle here in Canada.

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Today Ukrainians are not just fighting for their freedom, they are fighting for the freedom of all of us. We will not allow Putin and his thugs to dismantle the peace and prosperity that democracy has brought to the world. We will not waver. We will stand with Ukraine.

Slava Ukraini.

• (2125)

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Chair, I have been hearing from some constituents, including one who actually just passed through one of the border crossings from Ukraine into Poland, and one of the things he mentioned to me was the lack of supplies and necessities to support people at the border, such as blankets in the cold elements. Many of the individuals fleeing are women and children.

I am wondering if the hon. member would like to comment on some of the humanitarian aid that we could provide and if she would be in favour of increasing that support.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Mr. Chair, I agree 100% with my colleague. We have already created the matching fund with the Canadian Red Cross of \$10 million. That is just a start. We have already provided \$35 million in development aid and another \$15 million in humanitarian aid. We are working with other countries, not just for Canada to step up further but for other countries to also step up. We are taking a leadership role and I know that the hon. member will hear more in the coming days.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Chair, the previous speaker, my colleague, asked why Canada does not provide visa-free travel for Ukrainians when we have the largest Ukrainian diaspora in the world and 141 other countries offer that.

Will the government automatically extend the visas of Ukrainians who are here in Canada now, whether they be student or work visas, so that they are not forced to go back to Ukraine at this time?

• (2130)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Mr. Chair, yes, we are extending visas for those Ukrainians who are here in Canada on temporary visas. We are expediting all immigration visas. We are creating corridors for Canadians, for permanent residents and their families to be able to come here. I thank the hon. member for his advocacy because these are incredibly important moments to be able to bring as many people as we can to safety, and for those who are already in Canada to not have the stress of worrying that they are going to have to return home.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for her speech.

We know Canada and its allies have shut Russian banks out of the SWIFT network. However, some banks have yet to be removed from the system.

What is the government's plan to remove all Russian banks from the SWIFT system?

[*English*]

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Mr. Chair, we have been working in very close coordination with our allies and with like-minded countries to make sure we are standing united in making sure that Putin, the oligarchs and the banking system will be completely isolated in the world. We heard the Prime Minister very clearly say that we want to remove Russia from the SWIFT system. We have a number of other measures, and we are working very closely with other countries and with our European counterparts to make sure that there is not impunity for what is happening right now in Ukraine.

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the member for her remarks but also for her advocacy and her work, particularly in her parliamentary secretary role.

Could she speak to and summarize for the folks watching at home what some of the key things are that Canada has done from a humanitarian perspective and what still needs to be focused on in the days and weeks to come?

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Mr. Chair, I want to thank the member for Etobicoke Centre for his incredible advocacy on this and for his untiring and unwavering work in this area.

I would like to assure the member that in addition to what I mentioned previously, the \$10-million matching fund, which I encourage all Canadians to take advantage of, and the \$50 million we recently announced, which is in addition to over \$240 million we provided in previous years, we are working globally. We are working with our counterparts to make sure that we are providing more humanitarian aid and that other countries are stepping up as well.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am splitting my time with the member for South Surrey—White Rock and I want to thank her for her leadership as our shadow minister for national defence on this file on Ukraine, along with the great work that has been done by my friend, the shadow minister for foreign affairs, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

I also want to thank the government for coming up with the sanctions and delivering the lethal weapons that we have been calling for and that Ukraine has desperately needed. There is another bunch of weapons that were announced today that are going to go to Ukraine, which will go a long way in helping them defend their homeland.

What we have been witnessing over the last five days I think all of us find surreal. It is heartbreaking for those of us who have friends and family still in Ukraine. It is hard to watch, as I am hearing tonight that Russia has gotten way more aggressive in dropping in thermobaric warheads. This is a step down from nuclear. This is a very catastrophic event that is happening tonight and one that should be classified as a war crime. I think all of us here are keeping the people of Ukraine in our thoughts and prayers as this is playing out before the world on TV. It is heartbreaking and it is something that is going to take a long time to get over.

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At the same time, we have all been inspired by the leadership of the Government of Ukraine and what it has been able to do in mobilizing its citizens. We have been inspired by the bravery and courage of regular people picking up arms to defend their country and fight side by side with their soldiers who have been courageous in warding off the invading hordes coming across the border from Russia.

Because of that tenacity that Putin did not count on, he completely miscalculated going forward with this invasion of Ukraine. We have to keep in mind why Ukraine has been able to hold off one of the greatest military powers in the world. It is because, when we look at the Russian troops, they are fighting for a tyrannical dictator. If we look at the people of Ukraine, what are they fighting for? They are fighting for their country. They are fighting for their democracy. They are fighting to protect their freedom. They are fighting because they are trying to protect the European aspirations that they have had since the Maidan in 2014. Of course, they are fighting to protect Ukraine's culture and, most importantly, they are trying to protect their families. That is why we see men and women who have picked up arms. These are true patriots.

We have witnessed already Putin's revisionist history, his toxic rhetoric, and we all know from everything leading up to this that Putin is a pathological liar and we should never trust him. That is why diplomacy will never work with this man. We have to do everything we can to help Ukraine and everything we can to stop Putin's war machine.

There are three things that we have to do. We have to go ahead with breaking Russia's financial bank. That is why sanctions are important. That is why using SWIFT to target Russian banks is important. That is why we have to replace Russian energy and take away the ability for Russia to finance its war machine. We have to keep sending more and more support to Ukraine so they have that ability to fight back. The lethal weapons, anti-tank, anti-aircraft, anti-missile systems are what they need right now so that they can continue on with the fight, and more ammo. We do not want to see them run out of ammo in the street fights that are taking place today.

We need humanitarian aid. One of the things I have heard in the last little bit is that we can use improved first aid kits and send those over. We have them here in Canada, so we can send them to the front line. We have role 3 hospitals that I know the government purchased for the purpose of COVID. They are still sitting in their containers. Let us put them on the C-17s and get those role 3 hospitals over there to deal with the trauma that is happening. Of course, we have to continue on with isolating Russia on the world stage, suspending it from the G20, the OSCE and other international organizations.

The end of the Cold War gave us peace dividends, but the whole mirage of peace dividends has now been shattered. We have to do more and spend more on defence. We cannot do defence on the cheap anymore. We have to step up with our deterrents and our investments in NATO, in NORAD and in our Arctic sovereignty, because if do not, dictators, despots and tyrants will keep redrawing international borders through force. We cannot let that happen. We have to stand with Ukraine. They are the front line today.

• (2135)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I thank the member opposite for his vigilance on the Ukraine file and for his advocacy on many things we see eye to eye on, particularly this issue.

What I have seen at rallies in my riding and at rallies in the city of Toronto, some of which the member opposite has been at, is that the support for Ukraine is not just from Ukrainian Canadians. It is not just from Canadians generally. It is from people of all demographics and all ethnicities and backgrounds. I have seen Tibetan Canadian constituents of mine gathering forces with Ukrainians, supporting this fight against authoritarianism. I have seen Taiwanese Canadians standing up with Taiwanese flags at these rallies.

I am wondering if the member opposite could comment upon the unifying features we have seen among Canadians in rallying to this cause and what that portends in general for the fight against authoritarianism going forward and how we can rally against that and against the repression Vladimir Putin represents.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, it has been inspiring, watching how Canadians from all walks of life come out to support Ukraine at these rallies right across the country from coast to coast to coast. I have been at a few of these in Manitoba and Ontario, and people are overwhelmingly in support of Ukraine and want to help, regardless of whether they have Ukrainian heritage. As Canadians, we are all Ukrainian today, because Ukrainians are fighting for democracy. They are fighting for human rights and they are fighting for the international rule of law. Since Ukraine is fighting for all of us, all of us have to do everything we can for Ukraine. That is why the UCC has been organizing these rallies. I encourage people to get out there and donate. I appreciate the government is matching donations with the Red Cross right now, so that we can increase humanitarian aid and use organizations like the Canada-Ukraine Foundation to help those in need in Ukraine during this unpleasant time of war.

• (2140)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Chair, my hon. colleague has been very wise. As soon as I got to this place here in the House of Commons, I learned a lot from this member, particularly about Ukrainian issues. I would like to seek this member's advice again in relation to the Russian war crimes we are witnessing right now. These crimes are truly atrocious.

What role could Canada play to make sure we hold Russia accountable for these war crimes? In particular, can Canada fund some of the observations for these missions?

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Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, I want to say that the OSCE has been active in Ukraine monitoring what was originally the line of contact under the Minsk agreements I and II and has already been documenting a lot of the things that were happening in violation of those Minsk agreements. They are also the ones who will be documenting all the war crimes that are happening. We need to make sure the UN is involved in this documentation, but there is a role to play for NATO, the RCMP, the FBI and other law enforcement agencies to ensure that, for everything Russia is doing right now, we can hold Putin and his inner circle to account, including dragging them in front of the Hague at the International Criminal Court.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Chair, one of the conversations we are having as a result of this war crime by Vladimir Putin is around the issue of energy security in this country. Obviously, Europe is supplied with natural gas by Russia. Canada is the fifth-largest producer of natural gas. Clean Canadian energy can be exported around the world, not just used here at home. However, the issue of energy security is becoming critical, and I am wondering if the hon. member would comment on that.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, I can tell members that energy security for Europe is something that is of the utmost importance. If we want to ensure that Europe does not have to be reliant on Russian natural gas and oil, let us capitalize on our ethically produced, environmentally friendly, heavily regulated oil and natural gas sector and move those products to tidewater on the Atlantic, so that we can easily supply them. This has to become an issue of national importance and national security, and ultimately this is about international security to ensure that Russia does not have the ability to keep funding its war machine.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Chair, as I stand here tonight, as with all of my colleagues in the House, my thoughts and prayers are with the people of Ukraine, their indomitable spirit and their keen sense of patriotism as they stand up to a ruthless Russian dictator in Vladimir Putin.

As shadow minister for national defence and a former associate minister of national defence, my mind is also on the 550 Canadian soldiers in Latvia and the crew of our frigate, HMCS *Montréal*, now in the Mediterranean, and their families and what they are going through right now. I think of the reinforcements we are sending as well.

When I was in cabinet, we had made the transition from war-fighting in Afghanistan to the Afghanistan training mission. These things weigh on one's heart and mind. I can imagine that my government colleagues are not sleeping that well right now, so my thoughts are also with the ministers who are directly involved and the government at this time.

Close to home, Canadians pride themselves on their majestic and largely untapped Arctic. Our Northwest Passage and surrounding areas are increasingly of interest to China and to Russia for access to minerals and natural resources and for sea trade between Asia and Europe. Russian aggression on the European continent brings home to Canada that an aggressive Russia might also be eyeing our Arctic. Russian aggression could just as easily take place in the area adjacent to our Arctic coast and waters, and this must be understood by all Canadians. The prospect of further Russian aggression

in the north only reinforces the need for this government to purchase new F-35 fighter planes without delay and to cut steel on new warships.

As we all know, Canada has its signals intelligence listening post at Alert and an Arctic training centre and command centre at Resolute Bay. This year, we are supposed to see our first Arctic port become operational. In terms of defence capabilities for this vital region, we have our aging CF-18 fighter fleet, Victoria-class patrol submarines that can linger near the edge of the ice cap, a force of Canadian Rangers and Arctic offshore patrol vessels. It is simply not enough, and we must do more. Canada's northern warning system needs a major upgrade of its sensors and its coverage, both north and south, to protect us from a variety of new military threats, such as hypersonic ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and hypersonic glide vehicles, all armed with nuclear warheads.

Russia's Kola Peninsula is one of the most militarized areas on the face of the planet. It is home to Russia's northern fleet and therefore home to its sea-based nuclear deterrent. In the last few years, Russia has refurbished 13 air bases, 10 radar stations and 20 border posts, and has integrated emergency rescue stations on its Arctic coast. Russia has also created a special forces Arctic brigade to be deployed to the region and has tested a series of hypersonic cruise missiles and nuclear-powered undersea drones. Canada must take our Arctic sovereignty security much more seriously and not allow Russia's huge military buildup to go unnoticed and unchecked. Canada must push back on the Russian government with several initiatives.

I note, and my colleague mentioned it, that the latest reports say that Putin has used thermobaric weapons today in Kharkiv. These weapons cause massive shock waves that suck the air out of the lungs of its victims. This is very serious, and there is now a 14-mile long Russian convoy outside the capital of Kyiv.

There are many things we can do. We can expel the Russian ambassador. We can recall our ambassador. We can give visa-free access. We can immediately move to remove Russia from the G20. We need to send more help. These concrete actions will send a message to Putin, his oligarchs and the people who keep him in power that they cannot invade a sovereign state. It is time for them to listen to the words of a great leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, who said, "The world will not accept dictatorship or domination." We need only look at the patriotic fire in the eyes of Ukrainians and their President Zelenskyy and Ukrainians here and everywhere to understand that they too yearn to be free.

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• (2145)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I count it a privilege to be able to serve on the Standing Committee on National Defence with the hon. member, and it has been a good relationship.

I agree with one of her core points: The Russian militarization of the Arctic is moving at a furious pace and is of considerable concern. It should be a considerable concern to every Canadian.

I want to bring the member back to a question that interested me in our hearings this afternoon. Canada has spent millions of dollars in the training of Ukrainian soldiers, and it appears this may be actually paying off. The resistance being put up by the people and the soldiers to the Russian invasion is really quite impressive, and it may have something to do with the training that has been provided over the last few years.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Chair, yes, we are working away at the defence committee, and in fact we were just there earlier this evening.

The member has made a very important point about something all Canadians should be proud of. We have had trainers in the region for some years now, and no doubt Canadians have had a big hand in Ukraine's readiness to fight.

One cannot put the heart in people; they find that themselves. However, what we have done and can do is continue to train those who stand up for democracy and face an actual threat, as Ukraine has been dealing with now for a long time.

• (2150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for her speech.

Given her familiarity with military matters, I would like her opinion on a proposal her party put forward earlier to expel the Russian ambassador to Canada and recall the Canadian ambassador presently in Russia.

Does she not think that any approach to conflict resolution requires at least some dialogue and communication? Does she think it would really be productive to expel an ambassador rather than maintain that contact?

[*English*]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Chair, yes, I do think the ambassador should be expelled at this point and that we should recall ours.

Yes, dialogue is always important, but this is a ruthless, tyrannical dictator who is now in charge of an enormous army, the second-largest military force in the world. He has shown over and over again that he is not interested in dialogue. He is not interested in talking. There have been all kinds of opportunities for that dialogue. I am always one who pushes for dialogue and for talking and not going that extra step unless we have to, but this person is not listening at this point. If he shows any indication at all of being willing to listen, there are avenues for us to make that happen.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Chair, I had the opportunity, on the European Union friendship committee we have in Parliament, to spend a few years on the Standing Committee of the Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region. My colleague mentioned the Arctic sovereignty we have as a neighbour of Russia in our north, and I wonder if she could elaborate a bit more in regard to the issues around the Arctic and our independence and making sure we stand our ground in that area.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Chair, on both sides of the aisle, everybody is talking about a need for NORAD modernization. I do not think that is news. What needs to be done is like the expression “use it or lose it”. As far as China and Russia are concerned, they have been very clear that they want to be the powers in the Arctic, whereas Canada believes we should be standing up for our Arctic, and that means all of Canadian sovereignty. We simply have to do more.

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will be sharing my time tonight with the hon. member for London North Centre.

I want to start by again thanking members of the opposition and from all parties for agreeing to this debate tonight, because were it not for our unity of purpose, we would not be having this discussion tonight.

I am rising to speak on an issue that none of us want to be talking about. It is as simple as that. We were here on January 31 talking about a possible threat of invasion of Ukraine. Just a few short weeks later, we are standing here worried about the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. I never thought I would see this in my lifetime. It is surreal in the extreme.

For the second time in two years, the world has come together to fight significant challenges. This time, it is to voice our response to aggression from one antagonistic individual who is actively, aggressively threatening democracy and attacking an innocent nation. We join the international response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. We must send a very clear message to Russia that its flagrant violation of the UN Charter, of international law and of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine will not be tolerated. In short, we stand with Ukraine.

We have heard a lot, tonight and over the past weeks, about how we have friends and constituents and colleagues from the Ukrainian community. We all do, and we are proud of that. I want to talk about some of my own personal experience.

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I have lifelong friends in Anne-Marie Kurello, Tim Wolochatiuk, John Kozak. These are people I went to high school with. Anne-Marie Kurello, who is a friend to this day, sat beside me in grade 9 Latin. John Kozak, whom I have known since high school, sent me a text a couple of days ago thanking me, the government and Parliament for what we are doing to help Ukraine. I could feel the emotion as I was reading the words. My friend Tim Wolochatiuk, when we were in high school, would always take a day off to celebrate Ukrainian Christmas in January with his family. At the time, we just thought he was goofing off and skipping a day of school. I realized later that this was an important celebration for the Wolochatiuk family. I realize now how truly important that is.

I think about my friend and our former colleague, Don Rusnak, who represented the riding of Thunder Bay—Rainy River, or Fort William, where I was born. I am joined tonight by the current member. I went to the Prosvita club with Don a few years ago when I was visiting my hometown; I was born in Thunder Bay. It is a club where Ukrainian Canadians and Canadians of all walks of life come together to celebrate Ukrainian-Canadian heritage. It was a moment I remember now more than I did just a month ago.

Many of us in this chamber have welcomed young Ukrainian interns into our office. I have spoken of this before in this chamber. I think of them now. I reached out to one of them a few days ago. I sent him a message through social media. I simply said, “Are you okay?” His response was, “I’m fine, but I’m worried about my mother and my family and my friends. My mother is working in a hospital, and she’s now subject to martial law.” I gave him my word that we would do everything within our power to help Ukraine and to make sure that his family and his friends are safe. I give that word to all of the interns who worked in my office and worked here on Parliament Hill.

Over the last number of weeks, I have attended many rallies. The member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman has been at a number of them. He has come to Toronto. I had the member for Thornhill in my riding on Friday outside the Ukrainian consulate. The member from Barrie was there last week. We are all part of these friendship groups.

• (2155)

Ordinarily we participate in these things and politically we are tripping over each other to show our support for our community more so than the other party, but now those groups have meaning. The Canada-Ukraine Friendship Group is the most important group on the Hill at this very moment. I have had the occasion to speak with some Ukrainian MPs over the past few days. I am sitting at home comfortable. They are not. They are fighting for their lives.

I am calling for unity in this House. Let us put partisanship aside. Let us lock arms. Let us work together, the government, Parliament, as MPs and do everything we can to stand with Ukraine.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Chair, the speech by my colleague from across the aisle was a personal one in connection to what we are seeing unfold in the world today. I am with him in saying that I believe this House is united, that the parties are united, that Canadians are united. It has been wonderful to see the number of countries around the

world calling out this horrific invasion and the tactics of Putin for what they are.

We have talked about military support and what is necessary for that, but one of the things we do not talk often about enough, I believe, is something that has been unfolding over the last few days. It is the impact of the economic sanctions that are immediately being felt in Russia. There has been strong support for removing Russian banks from SWIFT, the central bank, and numerous other economic sanctions that have an impact.

I would appreciate his comments on that, on how through globalization it presents some challenges, but there is an opportunity to make a difference in the situation.

• (2200)

Mr. James Maloney: Madam Chair, that is a very, very important question.

Everything has to be done. I can remember several years ago the former member of Parliament for Etobicoke Centre talked about removing Russia from the SWIFT system. That is being done now. Sanctions have been imposed on many of the oligarchs. They have been imposed on President Putin himself. I believe they are working. I believe we need to do more.

We are working with countries around the world. That is an important message in all of this. I used the phrase “arm in arm” earlier. The world is working together on these things collectively, consistently and together. It is working.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for his heartfelt and emotional speech. We do indeed feel a sense of unity. The Bloc Québécois has offered its full support to the government today, indicating that we want to work with the government, because this cause is much bigger than all of us.

I would like to know whether my colleague has anything to ask of the opposition. Are there any issues on which he wants us to continue to work together in order to reach the quickest and most peaceful solution possible?

[*English*]

Mr. James Maloney: Madam Chair, I genuinely want to thank the member for that question because one of the most powerful moments in question period for me today was when the first question posed by the Bloc was not “Why haven’t you done this? Why haven’t you done that?” It was “What can we do to help? What can we do to work together to help stand with Ukraine?” That was very powerful, so I thank her for the question tonight.

The answer is to talk to us, to support us, to give us ideas. There is no monopoly on ideas. I ask that not only of her and her party but also of all members in this House. We have to leave no stone unturned.

Government Orders

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Chair, we have heard today how the government has acted on things like automatically extending work visas and student visas for Ukrainians here in Canada. Again, we hear of the special relationship between Ukraine and Canada. We have so many Ukrainian Canadians. It is the biggest diaspora in the world and yet we do not offer visa-free travel to Ukrainians whereas 141 other countries do.

I am wondering if the member would consider proposing that to his party so that, at least temporarily, Ukrainians could travel to Canada in this very uncertain time.

Mr. James Maloney: Madam Chair, the short answer is yes, I will. I have. These issues have been discussed by me and all of my colleagues.

As the member knows, tomorrow is the first day of Irish Heritage Month and that is important to me. Ireland did just that last week. It is an issue that we are talking about. It is something I would like to see done.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Chair, it is an honour for all of us tonight to come together and discuss this. I hesitate to use the word “debate”. It has been a very good discussion. We have seen a free exchange of ideas across the aisle. It is a testament to the fact that this issue does unify us.

Even in war, we find inspiration. We find so many examples of inspiration to draw upon in Ukraine, the way that its people and its leadership have stood up against the tyranny and carnage of the Russian regime and its president, Vladimir Putin. The people of Russia, it needs to be said, have shown enormous strength and courage. Let us make an important distinction between the regime of Putin and the Russian people. Thousands have been arrested. Thousands have been put into jail, and who knows what fate befalls them, but that courage needs to be recognized.

Canada has acted as it must. Sanctions against the Russian elite have been introduced, including against its president. Canada has come together with other countries, taking a leading role in helping bring countries together to block Russian banks from the SWIFT international payment system. Canada has also played a leading role in helping to bring countries together to support placing sanctions on Russia's central bank, and that is having an effect already. Canada is providing arms in the form of anti-tank weapons and ammunition, and as we saw yesterday, Canadian airspace has been closed to Russian aircraft.

We have contributed, but we must do more. We must do more for two primary reasons. Obviously, the bond between Canada and Ukraine is incredibly strong. There are many reasons for that, but I think migration is the key factor. Ukrainians have helped to build this country. There is no other way to put it. That is true particularly in western Canada, but it is also true in Ontario and it is true throughout the country.

I want to thank the Ukrainian community of London for its advocacy at this time. It has been a true honour to work with them to raise issues of concern in the past few weeks, and I will continue to

do that. I know that members in this House feel the same way about their community leadership in their respective cities and towns.

I want to also point to the fact that Ukraine is at the front line. A colleague across the way who spoke about 20 minutes ago emphasized that Ukraine is now at the front line. He used those words “front line”. I go for that. Ukraine is indeed the front line of the battle against authoritarianism. It is the front line of where democracy has been put into question. We have a choice to make as western democracies and as elected representatives within western democracies on how this is going to be confronted.

Do we want to live in a world defined by the whim of a despot, or will we stand up, collectively, as individuals in this House, as democratic countries who believe in the rule of law, who believe in sovereignty, who believe in the rights-based and rules-based order that has defined the world and its international relations since World War II? That is precisely what is at threat. That is not hyperbole. That is not an exaggeration. It is the reality that faces us.

The need for democracy extends, though, beyond simply cherishing it as an inherent value. It is the great stabilizer in our politics not just domestically but internationally as well. It is a truism. It remains a truism that no two democracies have fought a war against one another. There is a whole theory around this called democratic peace theory. I only have about 30 seconds left, so I will not go into that. I can do it another time.

What I will say is that democracy as a stabilizer needs to be taken seriously. For that reason, I think we ought to look at putting more funding into our defence, of course, and helping promote democracy abroad. I was in Ukraine a few years ago and saw the great work that Canada has done in working with NGOs on the ground to promote democracy.

I look forward to questions.

• (2205)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Chair, I am hearing overwhelmingly from people in my riding, those of Ukrainian origin and those who are not, about how much they want to help with the situation on the ground. There are three issues they have raised with me that I want to put to the parliamentary secretary.

The first is that they want it to be easier for them to send money to friends and relatives in Ukraine. Sometimes it can be very cumbersome to send money to family members overseas. I wonder if, as the parliamentary secretary for revenue, the hon. member could commit to looking into that issue and facilitating those remittances.

Another issue is that Canadians who have purchased supplies or donated supplies that could be useful for people in Ukraine want assistance in getting those over to Ukraine. Is the government in the process of sending supplies and is it able to assist with the transportation of donated goods?

The final issue is clarity for volunteers, those who want to volunteer and go over to help. Are they able to do that? What kind of support could they receive from the government?

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary could comment on those three issues.

Government Orders

• (2210)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Chair, to that last point, obviously it is a dangerous time. That goes without saying. Individuals will have to think very carefully about what they do. I know there has been enormous interest expressed by individuals not just in Canada but throughout other democracies in going to Ukraine and assisting in the form of a volunteer force.

We saw something quite similar materialize during the Spanish Civil War, among other examples, but that is the one that stands out. If individuals wish to make that kind of contribution, that is up to them, but of course I emphasize the point that it is a dangerous situation and individuals have to think responsibly about their own safety.

On the other two points that were raised, I would be happy to speak with the hon. member. He did not point to any specifics, but through an email or a chat I would be happy to hear more about the identified challenges that he points to and have a conversation.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Chair, today, a constituent in my riding of Vancouver East contacted our office. They have not been able to bring their loved ones to Canada. They have been stuck in the immigration system for more than two years because of the backlog in applications. Now that they are in this situation, obviously there is urgency. The quickest way for individuals to get to safety with their loved ones is visa-free access.

Why is the government not proceeding with that? What can we do as parliamentarians to help the government move in that direction and expeditiously bring about visa-free access for Ukrainians?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Chair, the question of visa-free travel can be looked at and considered. I also point out to the hon. member that the government, in fact, has acted proactively, going back to January, by putting in place a plan to ensure that individuals in Ukraine who had applied to Canada for work permits, for example, would be given support to have their applications approved.

Individuals in Canada who are on a temporary resident visa, for example, or students will be able to stay longer for obvious reasons.

I think that all of us in the House look at those measures as entirely reasonable. We will continue to work together, I hope, to put to the government even more ideas about what can be done to ensure a reasonable approach that guides the way forward but one that has the well-being of all Ukrainians in mind at the forefront.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Chair, I asked this earlier but I would like the opinion of the hon. parliamentary secretary. Will the government be considering going after the personal assets of the Russian oligarchs, including massive homes and mansions and yachts?

I know where one mansion is. It is in my riding and I would like it to be seized.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Chair, I always appreciate the passion of the member, especially on this matter.

I think what Canada can do and ought to do, and I speak here as a member of Parliament but I join colleagues in this, is join other countries and explore exactly what has been suggested here. There is no doubt that the network of oligarchs in Russia has many assets

abroad. If there are ways to address that and if there are ways to seize those assets and ensure they are not put to use by oligarchs who have surrounded the president to the detriment of the Russian people, then countries can discuss that and work among themselves for a resolution.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Madam Chair, God knows how much I wanted to believe in peace. I still believe in it today, because there is no other way out besides peace. We must remain hopeful that these rather strange negotiations currently taking place will bring an end to this conflict, and the suffering it is causing, as quickly as possible.

We must remember that during the previous take-note debate on the situation in Ukraine, our party and the government had some differences of opinion about the imminence of the conflict. Of course, those differences of opinion did nothing to prevent the conflict from breaking out. Ukraine has been unfairly attacked by Russia.

I told the Minister of Foreign Affairs that if conflict were to break out, the government could count on the full support of the Bloc and that we would stand in solidarity in terms of our desire to punish Russia and show our full support for the people of Ukraine. There is solidarity among us in the House, exemplary solidarity among the allies, and solidarity with the Ukrainian people, whose courage and resilience are truly admirable.

On Saturday, some colleagues and I met with Ukrainian colleagues. We spent a few minutes with some of them. One of our colleagues told us that the president and the deputies would stay in the capital. It would have been so easy for those parliamentarians to go back to their constituencies, to return to their families and the people they represent, but this is symbolic of how courageous Ukrainians are in the face of adversity, in the face of this unequal combat they are confronted with.

We simply have no choice but to support the Ukrainian people, first because this country is home to the world's third-largest Ukrainian community. These are people we connect with daily, who have family over there. We share and feel their anguish, their sadness, their concern.

We have no choice but to support the Ukrainian people because they have been subjected to an unfair attack that is also an attack against democracy, against freedom, against us.

Finally, we have no choice because the courage that the Ukrainian people are showing compels us to support them. We, by which I mean the Government of Canada and the west in general, have so far deployed a battery of measures to punish Russia, but also to punish Belarus, which has been complicit in the invasion of Ukraine. I mentioned today that we might want to take that a bit further.

• (2215)

As I said earlier, the Russians would not be at the gates of Kyiv if President Lukachenko had not allowed Russia to use his territory as a base to attack Ukraine from the north.

I have to say that I was, quite frankly, impressed by the speed and vigour of the response by western countries. I must admit that I had doubts. In the early hours of the invasion, we were hearing some reactions from Europe. Certain countries were saying that some of their companies should be excluded from sanctions, and that if Russian banks were banned from SWIFT they would have a hard time conducting transactions. It was starting to look like there might be a chink in the armour, which was worrying, but the west pulled itself together and the allies took action. We have to admire how quickly and strongly countries have responded, but there is still a lot to do.

I heard our Green Party colleague talk about certain oligarchs. Leonid Volkov, who is Alexei Navalny's chief of staff, appeared before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade and told us that we needed to take action. He gave us a list of oligarchs who should be sanctioned. Several of those on the list have still not been sanctioned.

I am pleased to hear my colleagues in government tell us that everything is on the table. If the government decides to move forward with this, it will continue to have our support, because we must do more. We cannot tolerate this unacceptable aggression towards Ukraine.

We must definitely provide all our support to the Ukrainian people, as we have started doing. This means providing military equipment, non-lethal as well as lethal. Ukrainians need it, as they are facing the second largest army on the planet. We are also talking about foodstuffs, drugs and medical equipment. We must rise to the challenge and give Ukrainians what they need.

We must also welcome Ukrainian refugees. There are currently half a million of them gathered in neighbouring countries, and they are asking for help. The leader of the Bloc Québécois pointed out that if we can accept people at Roxham Road without a visa, why should we continue to enforce entrance formalities for Ukrainian refugees and make them complete all the formalities for receiving a visa? We must remove these requirements and make it easier for Ukrainians who wish to find refuge in Canada, temporarily or permanently, to enter our country.

We have to cut Russian propaganda off at the knees by removing Russia Today from Canadian airwaves. Speaking of Russian propaganda, the Russian people need to be informed. I cannot help but be amazed at the thousands of people in the streets of Moscow, St. Petersburg and other Russian cities risking arrest the moment they hit the streets to protest this war against a people that did nothing to deserve it, a people whose destiny they have shared for over 75 years.

Many Russians do not understand, and many of those who do not understand are speaking out against what they feel is unacceptable. How many Russian families will be bereaved? How many soldiers' bodies will be returned to their families as casualties of an unjust conflict?

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As I said today, there may be hope in the Russia that is making itself heard today despite pressure from the powers that be.

• (2220)

In addition, as we heard from—

The Deputy Chair: I have to interrupt the member because his time is up.

The hon. member will be able to conclude his remarks when he answers questions.

[*English*]

Question and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Chair, I wanted to thank my colleague for his excellent speech and for talking about solidarity. It is such an important word. It was exemplified by the people of Ukraine over the last number of days. They have really shown us an example of that word and what it means.

This weekend I had a chance to participate in a rally in Lanspeary Park in Windsor—Tecumseh. It was organized by two very strong women and local leaders: Leisha Nazarewich and Carol Guimond. Many people at that rally asked, as Canadians, what we could do to show solidarity with the Ukrainian Canadian community. That is my question to my hon. colleague.

• (2225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, I would simply say that we have to do more. Even though what has been done so far is very impressive, we cannot be satisfied with that, because the conflict is still active. Men, women, the elderly and children continue to lose their lives.

We cannot tolerate that. It is human nature not to tolerate such a thing. We must make every effort and use every means at our disposal to end this conflict.

One thing I wanted to bring up in closing, is the courage of the Ukrainian people. We see them standing up to Russian tanks. The Ukrainian President is staying in the capital and eating with his soldiers. We owe it to Volodymyr Zelenskyy, to the defender, to the leader of the free world.

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank my colleague from Montarville for his excellent speech. I also thank him for his show of solidarity on behalf of all parliamentarians in the House and certainly on behalf of his political party.

I was planning to offer him some time to finish his speech because I thought it was good. However, he was able to add a few words at the end.

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I have a question for my colleague. If the world allows Russia to continue to invade the country, this will send a bad message. As the saying goes, might makes right. As a Canadian and as a Quebecker, that is something I cannot tolerate. Does my colleague see things the way I do?

I would like his opinion on that.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, I thank my colleague from Hull—Aylmer for his question and especially for saying he wanted to give me some time to finish my speech. I am very touched, hon. colleague.

He is absolutely right. There are autocrats in this world who think that the west showed weakness in how it ended the operation in Afghanistan. I am convinced that autocrats around the world are watching what is happening in Ukraine very closely.

Democracy is being tested. Russia is testing the solidarity and determination of democratic states.

I do not want to make an inappropriate comparison, but another European autocrat tested the determination and will of democracies a few decades ago. He paid with his life.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Chair, I thank my esteemed colleague from Montarville. I always enjoy listening to him.

He mentioned in his speech that he was a bit surprised by the very quick international response. We had another surprise earlier today. Switzerland emerged from hundreds of years of sacrosanct neutrality.

I wonder if my colleague shares my impression that this too marks something of a turning point in the way the west is handling this conflict.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, once again, my colleague is quite right. It is rather amazing to see Switzerland, whose neutrality has always been a cardinal value, fall in line, take a position in a conflict and decide to impose the same sanctions as other democratic states. As neutral as Switzerland may be, it is also a democracy.

I am certain that the Swiss authorities clearly understood what I said earlier, that what is happening at present is a challenge to all democracies around the world. Switzerland heard Russia's challenge, so Switzerland sided with democracies by condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

● (2230)

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Chair, it is a pleasure to work with my colleague on the foreign affairs committee, and it was a pleasure, in the previous Parliament, to work with him on the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations.

There has been a lot of discussion about the role of misinformation, and in particular there are concerns about RT. It is important to note some of the content we heard in the last Parliament. There are various so-called media outlets that are state-backed coming out of Russia and China that push misinformation and that also sometimes

feature atrocities as part of their programming. There are instances, for example, of forced confessions and human rights abuses that are happening in the context of TV production, yet they are licensed to operate in Canada.

I wonder if the member could comment on the need, as many members have said, to address the issue of RT, but also to look across the board at state-backed misinformation and propaganda coming into Canada and whether those entities should have privileged access to our airwaves. Of course, they still exist on the Internet, but in my view they should not have the privilege of broadcasting licences and access to our airwaves.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, I was speaking about cardinal values earlier. In a democracy, freedom of expression and freedom of the press are cardinal values. We must always be extremely cautious and careful when we decide to circumscribe, regulate or limit freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

As the courts have ruled over the past few decades, there comes a time when reasonable limits must be imposed. When it is clear that there is a propaganda campaign, we must intervene.

I will end by reiterating that the main victims of this propaganda, this disinformation, are not Canadians, the French or the British, but Russians themselves. We must seek to provide information about what is really happening in Ukraine at present so that Russians can clearly see just how unjust and undemocratic their government is.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Chair, I have a quick question for my colleague in the Bloc Québécois.

Does he agree that a world war broke out between dictators and true democracies as a result of the disinformation that my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan was talking about?

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, I completely agree with my colleague, and I mentioned this in my speech. The problem with Ukraine and Russia is that two philosophies and two world views are clashing. We must defend the side that prioritizes human rights and the rights of peoples.

[English]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Chair, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Surrey Centre.

It is a true honour for me to stand in the House this evening to take part in the important discussion and debate we are having on Russia's unprovoked attack on Ukraine. I want to start by thanking my colleague for Etobicoke Centre and all members of the House for making sure that we had the space and time to have this important discussion.

At this time, Canada is going through so much: our ongoing fight against COVID, unpredictability, uncertainty and so much change happening in the world today. However, despite all of this, the unprovoked attack on Ukraine is very much top of mind for Canadians, and it is most certainly top of mind for the residents in my riding of Davenport. I firmly stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and with its legitimate, democratically elected government and Parliament, not just because I am a proud Ukrainian Canadian, but because I too join all Canadians in condemning, in the most unequivocal manner, the unprovoked, unjust and illegal attack by Russia on Ukraine.

Two images stand out for me. The first image is of President Zelenskyy standing his ground, not leaving Kyiv and saying that he is staying. He is fighting for freedom, democracy and his country. There is the image of Ukrainians, and not just the soldiers, but everyday citizens who have decided to stay. They are using whatever is at their disposal to fight the Russians, such as molotov cocktails, and are taking up arms. Their bravery is inspiring. The second image is of the big country of Russia, a global military power, attacking a smaller nation, unprovoked. The world has taken notice, because all of a sudden we all feel threatened. If we do not stop this illegal and unconscionable attack on Ukraine, who is to stand up for us should this happen to us?

This illegal invasion is against international law and against article 2 of the UN charter, which says that no nation is less sovereign and less equal than any other nation and that no nation has a right to violate the integrity of another nation. Canada's UN ambassador reminded us in a speech at the UN a few days ago that the Soviet Union was actually present at the drafting of the UN charter after World War II. Russia is now in breach of the rules it helped craft and that it promised to follow. It knows what the charter says but has chosen to breach it.

I am so proud of Canada for stepping up to do its part by working closely and in conjunction with our allies and by taking action primarily with our NATO allies. We are also taking action independently and stepping up to do our own part by providing economic support, defensive weapons, lethal and non-lethal weapons and supplies and by imposing sanctions. On the immigration front, we are fast-tracking applications for Ukrainian refugees. We are also banning crude oil imports from Russia. The list goes on. We will not stop until this attack on Ukraine stops.

I have attended thousands of rallies in my life, but one of the best ones I attended happened yesterday. It was not only well organized; it was beautiful. We can all say the words “we are Ukrainian”, but yesterday I really felt it and I really believed that the 30,000 people in the centre of Toronto really felt it too. We had leaders from Jamaica stand up on stage and say, “Jamaica is Ukrainian today”. We had Hong Kong Chinese people stand up to say, “We are Ukrainian today”. I saw members from the Portuguese and Brazilian community there as well to show their solidarity. Every single culture and nation here in Canada was standing up for Ukrainians yesterday. The event ended with the Ukrainian Canadian Congress telling us to look up because there was a drone taking photos above us. They said the photos would be sent back to Ukraine to show all Ukrainians that Canada was there supporting them, thinking of them and

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praying for them. I hope they did see our photos and felt our love, support and hope for a peaceful end soon.

We want Ukraine to be victorious, and most of all we want peace for Ukrainians, who are part of a world that has seen too much bloodshed for too many years. I do hope that we find a way to get to a peaceful end. I hope with all my heart that there is a way for Putin to stand down. Our Canadian UN ambassador indicated a few days ago that it is never too late to stop, to dialogue and to negotiate, and we are prepared to find a way to peace, prosperity and progress for all peoples living in the region.

• (2235)

I am going to end by quoting Taras Shevchenko—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member will have to do that during questions and comments. I apologize.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

• (2240)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Chair, I will give my colleague a couple of minutes to finish her speech.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Chair, I thank the hon. member for allowing me to do that.

I want to end by quoting Taras Shevchenko. For those who do not know him, he is a Ukrainian kobzar, or the Bard of Ukraine, and he talked a lot about Ukrainian independence. He said:

Love your dear Ukraine, adore her,
Love her...in fierce times of evil,
In the last dread hour of struggle,
Fervently beseech God for her.
Fight on—and you shall prevail!
God helps you in your fight!
For fame and freedom march with you,
And right is on your side!

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Chair, that was a very moving speech and we all feel it. It is important to note that everyone in the House stands with Ukraine and Ukrainians in our communities and abroad.

Something that is really important for a lot of people is that Ukrainians do not require visas to travel to 114 countries, including most of Europe. Ireland announced that recently as well. The NDP has been calling for this since 2018. Why is the government so reluctant to provide visa-free travel to Ukrainians?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Chair, I thank the member for her support, kind comments and pushing for visas.

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The Minister of Immigration was very clear today, as all ministers on the government side have been, that all options continue to be on the table. We are looking at visas. I also hope that in the coming days it is something we will consider, and I have great hope that we will have some good news in the days to come.

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Madam Chair, my colleague mentioned a massive rally in Toronto. Smaller communities held smaller rallies, but with no less passion. In Kitchener, I attended a rally at Victoria Park, where members from the Ukrainian community, small communities and the Mennonite community were standing in solidarity.

Can my colleague explain the importance of people in Ukraine seeing communities all around the world coming together in solidarity to show their support?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Chair, I think many people come to this country because they are fleeing conflict, injustice and autocratic governments. In Canada, we very much value and appreciate our democracy, our freedom and our Parliament. These are things we all value and we have seen that in rallies, whether they are in small towns and cities, in big cities across this nation or around the world.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Chair, a lot of proposals have been put forward on top of the very good actions the government has already taken. One that I think came up earlier today relates to Canadian pension funds that are invested in Russian operations. We would have to amend the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act.

Would the hon. member agree with me that we should do so, and quickly, to divest of Russian investments?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Chair, I am reluctant to provide advice on our pension fund about what to divest or not divest. However, I will say that I am very proud not only of how the government has taken action, but also of Canadians across this country and businesses, small, medium and large. Everybody has stepped up to ask what they can do, and I would encourage everybody to continue to do so. What more can we do? How can we further support Ukraine and Ukrainians? That is something we all should be doing in the coming days and weeks.

• (2245)

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Madam Chair, Canada's ties with the people of Ukraine have historical roots since well before Ukraine was a sovereign nation. This is why we were the first western country to recognize Ukraine's independence just over 30 years ago.

Let me begin by saying that I am with Ukraine. Russia's invasion is unlawful. It is uncalled for and needs to be stopped. We must do everything we can to stop this unprovoked war. We have developed a strong diplomatic relationship fuelled by a passionate, engaged Ukrainian diaspora of over 1.4 million people. The Ukrainian diaspora and other communities across the country are stepping up to support Ukrainians in need. I am very proud of the Sikh community members in Surrey who are organizing a radiothon and telethon with the Ukrainian Canadian Congress to raise funds for Ukraine. Efforts like this are happening all over Canada, and bringing people together to support those affected in this time of need.

Historically, we signed the Joint Declaration on Special Partnership between Canada and Ukraine in 1994, which affirmed our countries' shared interests and desire for international co-operation. In 2014, thousands of Ukrainians stood up for a democratic future during the Revolution of Dignity. Canada supported many of the activists, human rights defenders and civil society organizations that fought tirelessly for a free and democratic future, and we continue to do so today in response to President Putin's aggressive actions.

Canada condemns Russia's unprovoked and unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. We reject President Putin's attempt to rob Ukraine of its history, identity, democracy and independence. President Putin's actions are a blatant violation of international law, including the UN Charter, and they threaten our shared security. President Putin has no interest in resolving the crisis peacefully. Instead, he is putting millions of innocent lives at risk and causing a humanitarian crisis.

In coordination with our allies and partners, Canada has implemented immediate and hard-hitting sanctions that target President Putin himself and Russia's leadership: key individuals in President Putin's inner circle and key Russian banks and financial institutions. They also target export control and sovereign debt restrictions. By hitting at the heart of Russia's financial sector, we are suffocating the Russian regime's ability to fund this war.

To support Ukraine's defensive capabilities, Canada recently announced more than \$7 million in lethal equipment and support items to the Ukrainian armed forces. This is in addition to the previously announced non-lethal equipment. On February 27, the government announced that Canada would send an additional \$25-million worth of protective equipment to Ukraine to support the Ukrainian armed forces.

Since 2015, we have been helping to enhance the capacity of Ukraine's armed forces through our non-lethal military training and capacity-building mission: Operation Unifier. We were pleased to announce the extension and expansion of this mission to March 2025.

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Further, we also backstopped Ukraine's resilience to Russian aggression through offers of financial assistance. This will help support Ukraine's economic stability. We also announced an additional \$35 million in development assistance that will help coordinate and scale up support for services for those affected by the conflict, particularly women and marginalized groups. Furthermore, we are continuing to provide over \$10 million per year in peace and security programming, including support to Ukraine's defence and broader security sector, to advancing the women, peace and security agenda, and to countering disinformation.

In order to meet the needs of those affected by the conflict, we responded rapidly by providing an initial \$15 million in humanitarian assistance, which has been allocated and disbursed to experienced human rights partners in Ukraine who are ready to respond flexibly to the situation as it evolves. This early response is now being complemented by the launch of a matching fund, and I am sure my colleague the Minister of International Development will speak more on how Canada reaffirms our unwavering commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We will continue to stand with the government and people of Ukraine as we have for the past three decades of diplomatic relations.

• (2250)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Chair, in 2014, after Putin invaded Crimea, Russia was expelled from the G8.

Should Canada seek Russia's removal from the G20 and possibly the OSCE? What is the member's view of that?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Chair, it is a good question. I think all cards are on the table. As we have seen, this government has put in place severe sanctions. Any tool in the tool chest that we can use to dissuade President Putin from his invasion into Ukraine is on the table. Many other G7 and G20 countries will be looking at that, and at the OSCE as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncás (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Chair, I want to acknowledge my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, who might be watching right now. I also want to congratulate the member for Surrey Centre for his speech.

Today he moved a motion to facilitate the immigration process for temporary residents or international students. Thousands, or even millions, of people will be forced to flee the ravages of war. What does my colleague think about eliminating the visa requirement for people who are fleeing war?

[*English*]

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Chair, I thank the member for mentioning my private member's bill and hopefully he will support that motion.

I am very open to it, if our government can work out the semantics of Ukraine visas. This country in times of need has demonstrated that, whether it is for Syrians or for any community in the past, including those fleeing from Eastern Africa, or for any people in need of refuge and a place to stay, we are open to that. I would be

very supportive of our government relaxing conditions so that Ukrainians who needed to flee would be able to leave.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Chair, I thank the member for the comments around doing everything they can. Certainly the travel visas and release of visas is very important to the communities of Port Moody—Coquitlam, Anmore and Belcarra. Many families there are very anxious and awaiting the release of that visa qualification.

I want to talk about another thing that people in my community are concerned about. That is the airing of RT today on the Canadian broadcast system. I wonder if the member agrees. Although some of the suppliers are removing that from their airwaves, should the CRTC take the steps to say no more RT will be aired in Canada?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Chair, actually that issue came up earlier today while I was speaking with some colleagues from the opposite side. The government cannot tell the CRTC who to remove, but I think there can be direction just as many of the broadcasters have removed it. I think a direction can be made and some instructions given on what type of propaganda television should not be allowed in Canada. Based on that policy, I am hoping that the CRTC will be able to remove such channels.

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Madam Chair, I wanted to thank the member for his remarks and for his advocacy. He mentioned that the Sikh community was working with the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and the Canada-Ukraine Foundation to raise money for humanitarian needs.

Could he tell us about the important work that they are doing to help the Ukrainian people?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Chair, yes. I was very happy to hear that members of the Sikh community led by Dr. Gulzar Cheema, a philanthropist and fundraiser for the community, stepped up and had spoken with several TV stations as well as radio stations to do a cross-Canada telethon and radiothon to raise funds to help those who are in need in a time like this, and to give any financial support that we can. I am very proud of the community in Surrey, and also across the country, who are helping their brothers and sisters in a time of need.

• (2255)

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

I rise today on a very serious issue, the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We know that Russia's attack is the most serious threat to rules-based international order since the Second World War. Since 1945, we have not faced something like this. It really threatens the longest period of relative peace and prosperity in modern history and, as a consequence, of course, threatens the security that Canada depends upon.

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I think all Canadians have seen in the last number of days the horrific footage on the ground from Ukraine. We know that there are a million Canadians who share direct roots to Ukraine. They have millions of loved ones, friends and family who are on the ground witnessing these horrors. The casualties are mounting, and it is a growing concern for all Canadians. I too share heritage from that area of the world, dating back five generations, so this hits very close to home.

Just a few days ago, actually, I saw an image that just hit me like a tonne of bricks. It was a young woman about my age. She is an opposition member of parliament, much like me, in the Ukrainian parliament. She is a new MP as well. I saw a photo of her that she posted in which she was holding a firearm. She explained that just a few days ago she was, in essence, a normal legislator, just going about her job much like I do. Then, within days, she is learning how to use firearms to defend her nation's security and her people.

To see someone who I relate to on so many levels showing that kind of courage makes me emotional. It hits really close to home. I hope that, if I am ever faced with that kind of horror, I have half the courage that MP Kira Rudik from Ukraine and the people of Ukraine have shown in the last couple of days. The resolve they have shown, and their determination to protect their country and their sovereignty, are one of the most incredible things I think I will ever witness in my time in Parliament. I applaud them for their bravery and their courage.

I will conclude about Kira with something she said recently. She said, "We now have a generation of children who know what war is". If that does not hit close to home, I do not know what will.

The Conservatives very much appreciate the efforts from the Liberal government in recent days. We do wish that it would have equipped Ukraine with military tools far sooner, but we are very happy to see the efforts it is taking now. We have a number of things that we propose could be taken immediately to support Ukraine, and things that we need to seriously be talking about in this House and across the country to ensure the sovereignty of not only Ukraine and Europe, but also of Canada, here at home.

In the immediate term we have called on the government to declare the ambassador to Canada from Russia *persona non grata*, so it is time to kick him out of Canada. It is time to recall our ambassador from Russia. That is something we can do immediately. That is something we can do today.

We have also asked the government to ensure that it is banning all Russian propaganda from our airways. I do believe that this is starting to happen as well. That is great to see but it needs to happen quicker. Again, it needs to happen now. There is no place for Russian propaganda on Canadian airwaves.

With Russia, it is about action. It has no right to be sitting at international organizations like, for example, the G20 or the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. It is time to kick it off of those. It has no right to be on those international organizations.

Also, to support the Ukrainian people immediately, we can see the government implement a visa-free travel regime so that we can bring Ukrainians to safety as soon as possible. I have many con-

stituents in my riding who have family there. We need to bring them to safety.

Then the last two things, which I hope to continue in the question and comment period, are that we have proposed that the government take very seriously and bring forward a plan to focus on Arctic sovereignty and security. We share a very, very long Arctic border with Russia. We are one of the largest land masses in the world, and most of it is the Arctic. Russia has 40 nuclear-powered ice-breakers that are equipped with torpedoes. Do members know how many Canada has? We have zero. There are serious investments that need to be made.

● (2300)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Chair, one of the issues I am very cognizant of is, of course, the variety of measures that the Canadian government needs to put in place to support Ukrainians. With respect to immigration, the government has announced that some efforts have been made. However, we also just learned that the government is not putting additional resources to support that work within IRCC. If we do not put additional resources into it, I fear that the backlog within IRCC and other streams will just escalate, as we have seen before.

What are the member's thoughts with respect to the government needing to put in additional resources to support immigration measures to support the people of Ukraine?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, the hon. member and I worked together on the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. I very much support seeing the government put more resources into ensuring we have a visa-free regime with which we can bring Ukrainians to Canada to be reunited with their families, to be reunited with Canadians and to bring them to safety.

That is something we can move forward with immediately. The government has the resources. They can put that in place in the coming days.

Another thing we can do to support Ukraine and all of Europe is to ensure our pipeline capacity takes Canadian gas to tidewater so that we can offset Europeans' dependence on Russia for gas. Forty per cent of European gas is dependent on Russia right now. What does that do to countries in Europe that are looking to support Ukraine? They are in a vise-grip from Russia because of the energy it provides those European countries. We can easily offset that by getting our resources to tidewater and by supporting the security of energy to our European allies.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Chair, my hon. colleague was referencing in her previous intervention the economic pressures that we can put on Russia. We have seen that from the global community in the last couple of days. I believe, in the coming days, we are going to see even more pressure and more success through that.

I would like my colleague to take the opportunity to talk about some of the economic measures that have been done to date, and elaborate further on how Russia, for years, has used its energy sector to fund its war machine. How could we stop that? How could we send a message and set that precedent that we are not going to accept that in a global community?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, one of the things we can do immediately is move to remove Russia from the G20 and from other international organizations. They have no place, having violated the international order, on those international bodies.

Again, I mentioned that we can expand our pipeline capacity to ensure we are offsetting the European dependence on Russian gas. We have gas, if only we could get it to tidewater to get it to Europe. This is something we should be hearing today from the government that it is silent on, as far as I am aware. I would like to hear more from the government on that.

Another thing I would really like to bring into this is the fact that Russia, which, as we know, is a nuclear superpower, has recently raised its own level of nuclear readiness. It is critical that we hold President Putin and the Russian government accountable for this gross violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, but also, at the same time, we need to ensure we are avoiding, at all cost, any escalation or accident between nuclear superpowers. That is paramount.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Chair, I am going to leave aside the wisdom of wanting to send natural gas or any other fossil fuels to Europe, but ask if, on reflection, anything can be done quickly, given that with all the supports in the world, the Trans Mountain pipeline, which was originally booked for a \$4.5-billion cost is now estimated to be a \$21.4-billion cost and will be years behind schedule.

It is not a viable solution, is it?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Chair, what I think is not viable is having Europe dependent on Russian gas and having our country's own sovereignty and security at the whim of 40 nuclear-powered weaponized icebreakers. I do not really care about the cost. We need to ensure that the security of Canada is first and foremost the priority of the federal government.

• (2305)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Chair, I rise today with all members of the House to join in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. This unwarranted attack on a free and democratic country highlights how our security is inextricably tied to that of Europe. NATO and its allies understand the danger of a belligerent Russia that seeks to redraw the international borders of Europe by force. Might cannot make right. Those dictatorial thugs who think they can take other countries by force now know the price they will pay. Canada must strengthen its own defences and renew its commitment to the NATO alliance.

Let us take pause and note the extraordinary courage of the Ukrainian people. They have galvanized the spirit of the entire world. They will never give up and we will always be with them. Defying the expectations of its collapse, Ukraine has kept going. Its people keep on fighting as we speak here at this very moment. His-

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tory has found the Ukrainian president, and his courage is remarkable to witness. President Zelenskyy has been subjected to the most intense stress test of character.

Putin, in his hubris, has made a tremendous error: Never underestimate the strength and courage of those who fight for freedom over tyranny, never underestimate the will of the free world to defend those who fight for freedom, and never assume that citizens would support a leader who would reign such terror on their Ukrainian brothers and sisters.

This is a conflict entirely of Putin's own making and every drop of blood is on his hands. Now it is clear he craves war and fears freedom and democracy. Putin thought that in seeking an invasion, NATO would just hand over Ukraine, yet even in that scenario all he could have gotten was internal chaos and civil strife.

I support our leader's call to expel the Russian ambassador. The ambassador should be expelled right now, and the government should recall our country's envoy in Moscow. Our leader is also correct that Russia Today needs to be taken off the airwaves. Foreign state-controlled broadcasters have no business spreading their misinformation in Canada, and I commend Rogers and Bell for making the decision to remove them.

Parliamentarians cannot ignore what is literally and figuratively fuelling Putin's power: oil and gas. We cannot ignore that. The Liberal government has failed to recognize that Canadian oil and gas are vital to Canadian and European security. We need to get new pipelines built to tidewater to displace Russian natural gas. Russia supplies 40% of Europe's natural gas. If supplies are cut, people will not be able to heat their homes, industry will shutter and Europe's GDP will plummet.

In buying Russian oil and gas, Europe has been filling Putin's coffers, paying him the money he needed to build up this brutal army that he is now using to savage his neighbour. No more, I say. No more can Putin impose tyranny and expect to enjoy the economic spoils of the free and democratic world. No more can a leader who has behaved as irrationally as Putin has have that much power over his neighbouring states. No more will we idly stand by.

Canada is the world's fifth-largest producer of natural gas, but we cannot export gas to Europe to assist European democracies because we cannot get pipelines built. The current Liberal government must get serious and realize our energy sector is not only vital to our economy, but vital to our security and the world's security. Moreover, Conservatives are calling on the government to step up for freedom and democracy by allowing visa-free travel from Ukraine to Canada.

Our red lines must be clear. NATO must stand fast. Article 5 must be sacrosanct.

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I would like to close with the words of President Kennedy as he addressed the nation on October 22, 1962. He said:

My fellow citizens: let no one doubt that this is a difficult and dangerous effort on which we have set out... But the greatest danger of all would be to do nothing.

...The cost of freedom is always high—but Americans have always paid it....

Our goal is not the victory of might but the vindication of right—not peace at the expense of freedom, but both peace and freedom, here in this hemisphere, and, we hope, around the world. God willing, that goal will be achieved.

• (2310)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Madam Chair, in 1994, Ukraine agreed to get rid of its nuclear weapons as part of one of the three Budapest memoranda. Three world powers, namely the United States, Russia and the United Kingdom, acted as guarantors. This memorandum also stipulated that the countries were to respect Ukraine's independence and sovereignty within its existing borders and refrain from the threat or use of force against Ukraine.

Belarus is hinting that it could renounce its non-nuclear status, in violation of its commitment in the Budapest memorandum, and I would like to know whether my colleague agrees that Russia is violating the terms of the memorandum with respect to Ukraine through its present actions and that the United States and the United Kingdom have a responsibility to Ukraine under that same memorandum.

[*English*]

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Chair, let me be perfectly clear: Mr. Putin's word is not worth the paper it is written on.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Chair, I just want to congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech this evening. I asked other members of the House tonight about the issue of Canadian sovereignty in our Arctic. I know that my colleague, coming from Winnipeg, has his heart and soul in that, with the research that we have at the University of Manitoba.

I wonder if he would elaborate on the fact that we are a neighbour to Russia and what we could do to defend ourselves in that area.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Chair, what we all recognize here today is that we have woken up to the tyranny of Putin's Russia, and that affects the entire world. Canada is not immune to that.

We share a border with Russia. Mr. Putin, just the other day, spoke about raising his nuclear arsenal's alert. We have to wake up to the reality of Putin's Russia and do whatever we can to protect ourselves, protect all Canadians, including protecting the sovereignty of our Arctic.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Chair, it is kind of a personal reflection from another context that has not been mentioned tonight, but I find it so extraordinary that President Zelenskyy is also a Jewish leader in a country that has been known in the past for anti-Semitism. I wonder if the hon. colleague would have any reflections on that.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Chair, again, President Zelenskyy has shown us all what true leadership is. We have to give him all the support we can and wish him well in his endeavours to protect his country.

I only hope that if Canada ever faced a similar situation that our Prime Minister would act in the same vein.

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am grateful for the support that many of the members of the official opposition have shown for the steps that the government has taken. A lot of unity has been shown, and it is really important at this time.

A lot of the measures that Canada and other countries have instituted have been around providing Ukraine with military support, like the announcement that was made today around weapons, as well as economic sanctions in a variety of forms. I am wondering if the member could speak to whether he agrees with those measures, and what, if any, impact he thinks those measures are having to help Ukraine?

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Chair, in my brief time here, I was elected in 2019, I have never seen the House come together in such a way. It is really wonderful to see. I sit on the foreign affairs committee. We have been working together as a team to promote Magnitsky sanctions, sanctions under the SIMA legislation, and the whole world has come together to work in lockstep to do the same thing.

We recognize that this is a fight for freedom over tyranny and it is a line that simply cannot be crossed.

• (2315)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Chair, I will be sharing my time with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

A lot has been said this evening with respect to the various measures that Canada has put in place to help Ukraine and about coming together with the world in our response to the outrageous aggression that is coming from Russia right now, and particularly to Putin. I think it is very important to put on the record, at least from my perspective, that I do not believe the Russian people are bad. I just think that Vladimir Putin is a monster.

We have talked about the various things that have been put in place, whether it is sanctions, money that has flowed to Ukraine or the personnel sent over as part of Operation Reassurance. What we know from the history over the last decade or so of Canada's involvement is that there has been an opportunity to really help Ukrainian people prepare for what has unfortunately come to pass.

What I want to talk about in the short amount of time I have is the incredible resolve that we have seen from the Ukrainian people. The member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman talked in his speech about the manner in which Ukrainian people were responding to what is going on. He compared it to the manner in which we are witnessing Russian troops engaging.

The member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman specifically said when someone is under a dictatorship and they are being told what to do, they are never going to have the same resolve as those who are fighting for something they believe in and that they are so passionately pursuing.

It reminds me of when I was on the defence committee and travelled to Ukraine as part of a study we were doing on Operation Unifier and Operation Reassurance. The member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman was there as well. He would remember that at one point we went to meet with the new police chief of Kyiv. We met him in the centre of town, and he could not have been more than 35 or 37 years old. It was remarkable to listen to this young individual talk about the future of Ukraine.

Indeed, what we know is that in 2014, the revolution that took place was led by future generations. It was led by the youth. It was a youth movement that changed the course of Ukraine back in 2014. What we heard from this young police chief is that things were done differently in the past.

Remnants of the former Soviet Union still existed in Ukraine, and they literally had to fire almost every police officer who was over the age of 40 just because they did things differently, and that is not the future that the younger generations wanted. They knew what they were going for. They knew how to chase after it. They knew it had to be done.

If we want to talk about the resolve of the Ukrainian people versus the resolve of those who are under a dictatorship, look no further than one of the former presidents of Ukraine, Yanukovich, who was president during the uprising. What did he do? He fled the country as a result of a youth revolution. He literally got up and left because of what was going on.

We can compare that to the president of Ukraine today, President Zelenskyy. He will not go anywhere. He is steadfast in his commitment to staying with his people and staying in Ukraine to see this through to the end. Nothing can show the difference that the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman was talking about in his speech more than the approach by the two different presidents, one who was a puppet of Putin and one who is for the people.

I genuinely believe that regardless of what happens, regardless of the wars that are fought today, the battles that might be won or lost today, at the end of the day the Ukrainian people are going to get what they want. They are going to get this freedom because they have been fighting for it for a long time and they have the resolve to see this through to the end. It is clear that they will win their freedoms at the end of the day, regardless of these temporary impositions that Putin is putting in the way.

● (2320)

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Chair, it is really great to see the very civil discourse tonight. This is probably the most civil I have seen any debate in the House in my few years as a parliamentarian. I thank the hon. member for those efforts.

I would like to ask the member what his thoughts are on Europe's dependence on Russia for gas. What does he feel the impact of that is on Europeans and their ability to support Ukraine? Does he feel Canada has a role to play in providing energy resources to Europe?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands answered this very well through her question, which basically indicated that even if Canada was to try to take on that

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role it would be a long time in the making. It is not something that is going to be able to correct and help immediately.

Regarding dependence on a nation like Russia, in particular for Europe, should we be doing what we can to assist in ensuring that does not happen? Yes, absolutely. We can also do what we are doing now, which is putting tough sanctions on Russia to make sure Putin is crippled to the point where he is unable to do anything globally. We know that the economy is so dependent on the global movement and interchange of goods and services. If we can bring him to his knees in this regard, we certainly would be doing the world a favour and, in my opinion, helping Europe as well.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Chair, at the risk of sounding like a broken record, here in Canada we have the largest Ukrainian population in the world outside of Ukraine. There are 141 countries in the world that offer Ukrainians visa-free travel, yet Canada does not. At this time especially, is there any way the government can, at least temporarily, give Ukrainians the right to visa-free travel so they can get here as safely and quickly as possible?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, there are two things. The first is we certainly have put in place, and I am sure the member is aware of it, various different measures for those who are already here to make sure their stays are extended, whether it is a student visa or people who are travelling, to ensure they do not have to go back to Ukraine right now.

To the point the member and others have been bringing up today about visas, I have not given it much thought yet. Personally when I think about it, yes it makes a lot of sense. I also know these decisions are made by weighing a whole host of different variables. I have not heard the other side of it, but the question being asked is a good one and it warrants discussion. If it is one way we can assist and it proves to be a safe and effective way, then I personally would not have anything against it.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Chair, I echo the comments of the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul. It is certainly a wonderful thing when we can come together and unify around a common cause, which is to defend the people of Ukraine against an aggressor, which I do not think is the nation of Russia, but increasingly seems to be its leader. He is unconcerned with the fate of his own people as well as the people of Ukraine.

I ask our hon. colleague if he has any thoughts on how we can reach out to the people of Russia who are bravely standing up in peace marches to encourage them to fight against Putin.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, it certainly is encouraging to see people who are standing up and protesting in a country where we know things can happen to those who are very loud and vocal about their opinions. They are still doing it, so that is all the more inspirational.

What can we be doing? We can be giving them the tools to make sure their voices are heard. We can be communicating through various technologies we have today to make sure the right information is coming forward.

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When President Zelenskyy specifically spoke to the Russian people in Russian, that was incredible, but we know that is not going to be played on RT, Russia Today. We need to make sure we are doing our part to get messages like that in front of the Russian people, because they are being oppressed. The manner in which they are being pushed down is the exact same thing Putin wants to do to Ukrainians. Whatever we can do to make sure that message gets through is something we should be doing.

● (2325)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Chair, I rise tonight in a debate that is of historical importance because the world has changed. I know that is an overused phrase, but we are not in the same place we were a week ago, because Vladimir Putin is even threatening the use of nuclear weapons after an illegal, appalling, aggressive assault on a democracy that did not threaten him.

One can look back and ask what we should have done at different points in the history of the relationship of the former Soviet Union with the west. When the Soviet Union fell, I remember wondering in that moment, “Where is the Marshall Plan? What are we going to do for the former states that were once the USSR, Russia and its neighbours?”

Clearly they needed help. We did not offer. We were in a triumphal mood of western capitalist hegemony and we just abandoned the people of Russia. We essentially abandoned them to organized crime. Capitalism maybe, democracy not much, but there was a lot of plutocracy in natural resources. The people of Russia had reduced life expectancy in this time, and still do to this day. Their quality of life after they got rid of the USSR went down. That should never have happened. We should have been wishing for the peace dividend. We have been waiting for the peace dividend. We stopped putting so much money into budgets in the United States and all around the world for the military-industrial complex because we did not need it any more. There was no more USSR—but no, we found other enemies. We decided we did not need a peace dividend. We kept investing in war and we missed the chance.

This is probably the biggest chance we missed, because Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan started down the path of global nuclear disarmament, and here we stand as Canada: We have a treaty to abolish nuclear weapons, and Canada is not even a signatory. We need to pay attention to this, but we thought that nuclear weapons were in our rear-view mirror. They are not. They are in stockpiles and in missiles, and we need to pay attention again to the threat of nuclear war.

In tonight's debate, which has been mostly very much on the same theme, I need to address the more than occasional misplaced notions that now we need to build more pipelines and that Europe needs more fossil fuels. If we listen to what the leaders in Europe and in Ukraine are saying, we do not hear these calls. In fact, the Energy Commissioner for the European Union, Kadri Simson, said this: The crisis in Russia means that we have to “boost renewables and energy efficiency as fast as technically possible.”

What is Germany saying? Germany just axed its biggest carbon project with Russia. The Nord Stream 2 pipeline has been cancelled, and what did Robert Habeck, the economy and climate min-

ister, who happens to be a Green Party co-leader, say in Scholz's government? He said, “Now is the time to accelerate” and shift to renewables. It's being a petrostate and having dictators of petrostates that makes the world less safe.

Some of the big oil companies are saying they have to get out of Russia. Shell and BP have pulled their projects out of Russia, but look at Exxon. It is still in there. Let us ask Exxon in every way we can why it is still invested in Russian oil and gas. The French company, TotalEnergies, is also still invested in Russia.

The most compelling information about what should we do about fossil fuels in this crisis is to listen to the head of the IPCC Ukraine delegate, the scientist Dr. Svitlana Krakovska, who said while bombs were falling near Kyiv, “We will not surrender in Ukraine and we hope the world will not surrender in building a climate resilient future.” She added, “Human-induced climate change and the war on Ukraine have the same roots—fossil fuels—and our dependence on them.”

I want to thank our Deputy Prime Minister. We are unique in the world that our Deputy Prime Minister happens to be an expert on Russia. She wrote the book *Sale of the Century* about the plutocracy and organized crime that took over the former USSR. I know that her background and the unique honour of being personally banned from Russia by Vladimir Putin equips her well to lead the fight to get the SWIFT financial resources taken away from Russia.

My time is up. I look forward to questions.

● (2330)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Chair, I knew the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands was going to be speaking about fossil fuels, but I am very happy that she brought up nuclear weapons and Canada's inaction on the nuclear treaty ban.

I would like to give the member more time to respond to some of the Conservative calls for Canada to export more oil and gas to Europe, and some of the logistical problems with that even being contemplated.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Chair, to my hon. colleague for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, if President Zelenskyy was saying “Canada, send your oil”, and I have a really had time saying that, as I do not think I could say no to President Zelenskyy for anything I am so inspired by him, but that is not what he is saying.

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It is not what Germany is saying. It is not what the EU is saying. It is what Alberta is saying, and I think taking advantage of a crisis to promote one's own product is not a good look.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Chair, I want to build on the comment from the NDP member and talk about that. I mean, the line is the logistical challenge of Canada providing, for example, natural gas to Europe, but the other logistical challenge we have, and that Europe faces, is that they are reliant on Russian energy at this point. Part of the opportunity, as we look at the perspective we have as Canadians, is the attention to the human rights and a global perspective in what we are seeing here. Our record on the environment, our record in the international community, stands much better than Russia's.

I would like the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands to talk about the logistical reality of Russia having Europe caught in a bind when it comes to natural gas. Can Canada not play a better role?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Chair, all of the commentary I have been looking up today on the German discussion about what to do now that it is cutting off Russian natural gas is discussions about the fact that natural gas that comes from fracking has the same carbon footprint as coal, so they are actually discussing whether in the short term they should use a bit of coal as a bridge until they get to renewables, which is the only reason they were going to use natural gas.

Obviously, the propaganda around natural gas has been very effective, because I know a lot of people honestly think that it is a low-carbon fuel, but when we look at the whole upstream, fracking and massive releases of methane, it is a climate killer.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Chair, it is always nice to hear the different views of the parties in the House on issues that are a bit more divisive.

One of the things we discussed tonight is what to do about Russian diplomats in Canada. Do we expel them or not?

I agree that they are contributing to the disinformation. Even today, it was claimed that the demonstrations endangered the lives of diplomats, even though they were extremely peaceful.

I am curious to hear the views of the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands on those diplomats.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Chair, I thank my hon. colleague.

I think that is a good idea. The government has said that all options are on the table.

However, perhaps the government wants to keep the lines of communication open. The only reason to protect Russian diplomats in Canada is that they might be sympathetic to the Ukrainian cause. If not, they should all be sent home.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Chair, given the discussion that has been going on about Canadian oil and gas and the member's comments about it, I am wondering if she can give me her perspective on what she thinks is

more realistic. Would it be a pipeline, which is supposedly now four times as much as it was before, being built to provide sustainable, carbon-based fuel to Europe, or a transition towards more renewables and electrification? What is more realistic?

• (2335)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Chair, there is what is realistic and what is necessary. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report just today reinforces that we do not have a choice. If humanity wants to survive within a climate that sustains our lives and human civilization, we do not have a choice. We have to get off fossil fuels as quickly as possible, and the governments of Europe seem to see that this is an opportunity to move faster towards renewables, not to back into the fossil era.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Chair, tonight I rise in this place, only months after my arrival in this House, to discuss a matter of utmost importance and true urgency, albeit I wish this day would never have come. However, we all must rise to this occasion, a moment in our history, a moment for unity and a moment for all of us to stand with Ukraine at this time in its hour of most need.

Prior to moving to Edmonton, I grew up in a small Métis community in Alberta called Fishing Lake. Many who know that part of our province well know that there are largely two groups: many who are indigenous, like me, and Ukrainians, our neighbours for over 100 years.

The Ukrainians are the very same people who paint our fields gold each summer, a truly remarkable sight to see. Ukrainian families were some of the very first people to settle Treaty 6 territory. They were here long before Alberta was even a province. A true example of the spirit and intent of a treaty, many of these friendships still endure today.

Ukraine has shocked the world with its heroic resistance against Putin's war of aggression. President Zelenskyy and hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians have bravely resisted the Russian attack, even in the face of overwhelming odds. However, despite the brave efforts of Ukraine's military, the situation on the ground is dire, especially for the many civilians who are caught in the crossfire.

As we speak, Russian artillery and missile attacks are pounding Ukraine's cities day and night. Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, is under siege. Its three million inhabitants have been forced to take shelter in their homes, in Kyiv subways and in improvised bomb shelters. According to the UN Secretary-General, there are credible accounts of residential buildings, other civilian infrastructure and non-military targets sustaining heavy damage under Russian attack. He emphasized in his speech today that this escalating violence is resulting in civilian deaths, including children.

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The people of Ukraine are no strangers to Russian imperialism. Putin's invasion is the latest in a long line of aggressive and illegal attacks on Ukraine's sovereignty. The escalating tactics that the Russian military is employing against Ukraine's military and civilians alike are in keeping with a long line of atrocities. As Amnesty International's secretary general recently put it, "The history of Russia's military interventions, be it in Ukraine or Syria or its military campaign at home in Chechnya, is tainted with blatant disregard for international humanitarian law."

The Russian military repeatedly flouted the laws of war by failing to protect civilians and even by attacking them directly. Russian forces have launched indiscriminate attacks, used banned weapons and sometimes deliberately targeted civilians and civilian objects, a war crime.

While Russia's government and military and, above all, its president deserve our complete condemnation, it is vital that we recognize that the Russian people are far from united in this war. Many of them are showing incredible bravery by standing up to Putin and saying no to war.

Tens of thousands of ordinary Russians have stood up against this brutal war in the streets of cities across Russia, from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok. Night after night, they have flooded into city squares to call on the government to withdraw its troops from Ukraine and leave its people in peace. These brave protesters have put their freedom and their physical safety on the line to say no to war and no to Putin. The growing number of Russians who are bravely protesting against this authoritarian government understand a fundamental truth about this invasion: This is Putin's war.

To stop it, we must act aggressively with sanctions not only against Vladimir Putin himself, but also the wealthy class of oligarchs who support his rule over Russia. I strongly agree with the member for Burnaby South and experts like Bill Browder that the only way to truly deter them is by seizing the wealth they have hoarded from Russian people and stashed abroad in tax havens and luxury real estate.

Canada must immediately expand our sanctions and target the assets of Russia's ultrawealthy and act decisively to ban their financial transactions here in Canada and across the globe. We must ensure that those in Putin's inner circle are not able to hoard their wealth in luxury real estate in Canadian places like Vancouver and Toronto.

Even after the invasion of Ukraine, many oligarchs with well-documented ties to Putin's regime are not the subject of Magnitsky sanctions. This must change and it must change now.

● (2340)

Canada cannot stop there. We must do everything in our power to ensure that Ukrainians fleeing this horrific war find a safe haven here in Canada. Even before Putin's invasion, Ukraine was already facing a truly massive refugee crisis. According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, approximately one and a half million people were internally displaced after fleeing the conflict in Donbass and from Russian-occupied Crimea. Now, thanks to Russia's invasion, millions more refugees are fleeing Russian air strikes, missile

attacks and military columns. They need our help, and they need it now.

As the proud home to the largest Ukrainian diaspora in the world, Canadians, including my constituents in Edmonton Griesbach, are ready to step up, but the reality is that the federal government can do much more as well. Despite years of calls from the Ukrainian community and the NDP, Ukrainians still do not have visa-free access to Canada. This must change. Ensuring that Ukrainians have visa-free access to Canada is truly the bare minimum, but IRCC's response today at the foreign affairs committee on the visa requirements was not encouraging. When asked about the Ukrainian visa requirements, the director general of immigration program guidance at IRCC said, "We're going to continue to look for ways as the situation evolves to make that facilitated, but the Ukrainian visa requirement is not currently under review." This is not acceptable.

The Liberal government needs to immediately remove the Ukrainian visa requirement. While Putin was amassing troops in Belarus and on the borders of Ukraine, my colleague the member for Edmonton Strathcona and I wrote to the Minister of Immigration urging him to take action to prioritize family reunification and ensure that Ukrainians are not caught in the years-long IRCC backlog. IRCC has been broken for years and now more than ever. We need a massive investment in human resources and personnel to process the many people who are fleeing wars and seeking safe haven in Canada.

While we must act decisively to ensure that Ukrainians find refuge in Canada in the coming days and weeks, we must not also turn our backs on those who have already been fleeing from wars in other regions. In particular, I am thinking of the people of Afghanistan. The House should not forget that the fall of Kabul took place just over six months ago and Afghan people who fled the Taliban are extremely vulnerable. Canada must make sure we have the resources to help everyone who is fleeing conflict.

I want to thank my hon. colleagues from all parties in the House. What I have witnessed this evening has been truly a pleasure to see. When the world needs Canada, this House is united in doing what is right. Although there is much work ahead, I remain hopeful that our unity here will ensure Ukraine's freedom, sovereignty and security.

Lastly, it is in the spirit of hope and unity that I want to share with the House what I experienced just three days ago. I stood at the Alberta legislature with Ukrainians from across Alberta. There were Ukrainian friends like Marni from my community who are in pain but whose strength has shone through these truly dark times. I heard the Ukrainian national anthem. It touched my heart and I was moved by the many who joined in the beautiful harmony, the song of a people united and strong, as we all must be here in the coming weeks.

“Upon us, fellow kin, fate shall smile once more.”

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Chair, the member's speech was very thoughtful, measured and passionate. Like him, in my riding of Vancouver East, the Vancouver branch of the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians also stands with the people of Ukraine and has been calling for a peaceful resolution. Their hearts bleed for the fact that their family and friends are in this horrible situation.

The Canadian government has taken action with our allies. I am wondering whether the member thinks that the day will come when there will be a peaceful resolution and this violence will end.

• (2345)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Chair, peace is more of a process in many ways than it is a goal. We must continuously protect and safeguard the principles that make our society truly free and democratic. We have to ensure that we can protect those who are most vulnerable and ensure that our country and our society are protected and safeguarded against true evil tyrants and oligarchs like the ones we see with Putin and his gang of thugs.

We have a lot more work to do and in terms of the work that has to happen at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, I know that the member for Vancouver East and I will work as hard as we can to ensure that those fleeing conflict get to safety.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Chair, I just want to thank all the members today who have participated in tonight's conversation. It was not much of a debate, because we are all standing in unity here with Ukraine and with one another in the face of the terrible atrocities that are being committed by Vladimir Putin in Ukraine.

I do appreciate the member for Edmonton Griesbach for pushing the issue of making travel from Ukraine to Canada visa-free. It is the same thing the European Union has done, and we know the European Union is taking in massive numbers of Ukrainians who are fleeing. They do not have to apply for refugee status to enter into the European Union, so we need to, first and foremost, establish our own visa-free travel to Canada for everyone who needs to get out of harm's way in Ukraine, and secondly, we need to support the European Union nations who are currently housing and feeding those Ukrainians who have gotten to safety and left behind their loved ones.

I was wondering if the member would like to elaborate on that. What types of humanitarian efforts are going to be under way to support those in the European Union who are dealing with the frontline trauma coming across the border from Ukraine?

Government Orders

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Chair, I truly want to thank all members of the House for what I found to be a truly uniting discussion at a time when our country truly needs to see leadership. We have many people across the globe that look to Canada as a leader, not just in peace and security but also in our ability to provide support to others. The humanitarian crisis that is happening and unfolding in Ukraine and across Europe right now is truly tragic. We need a global approach to ensure that level of human suffering does not get worse.

It is up to each and every one of us here and, truly, our colleagues across the world in all free, democratic societies to safeguard that and ensure we provide that support, that we do not simply measure our actions by words but measure them truly by the people we support. I am confident with what I have heard tonight from the House that we will truly achieve that.

I want to thank the hon. member again for his steadfast commitment to Ukraine and the people of Ukraine.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for his speech.

As I said just now to the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, it is interesting to hear all the party members' points of view that may be a little different. This evening, though, there is a broad consensus.

We like using discussion as a way to determine our positions. To help me make up my mind, I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on the possibility of sanctioning Russia by sending Russian diplomats home.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Chair, we have to really seriously consider the role that diplomacy can play and whether or not Russia is truly a country that can or is willing to negotiate.

I think that is the question we have to debate in this house and it is still up for debate. I think there are attempts, especially after I have seen Ukrainian officials meet with Russian officials. I thought that was a hopeful sign that diplomacy is still alive.

However, I remain very cautious and very, I would say, nervous for the actions that are unfolding right now across Europe, in particular with security in Ukraine. I think that, as tensions continue to rise, diplomacy will become less and less of an option. When it is very clear that diplomacy is no longer an option, we must expel the ambassador. However, to this point, I do believe there are still opportunities to ensure we have a discussion and that Russia has a moment to still prove to us that they can, in fact, be reasoned with.

• (2350)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Chair, I would like to thank my colleague from Edmonton Griesbach for his speech and his point of view.

Government Orders

I put this question to my colleague from Montarville. I am sure my colleague from Edmonton Griesbach also agrees that we need to push back against the idea that might makes right in international relations.

Does he agree with me that economic sanctions are more effective than military force at getting Russian oligarchs to see that enough is enough, that they like all their pretty things and that they would prefer peace to continuing the invasion of Ukraine?

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Chair, I want to thank the hon. member for his question and for really highlighting a problem that exists right now in the world. We have a very small group of people who are oligarchs, meaning they have tremendous power and wealth. They are controlling systems around the globe, not just in Russia.

I believe that Russia is one of the most aggressive countries that has found and manipulated ways to use capital, to use that capital to create pain, and particularly to hide that capital as well. What we are seeing in countries all over the world are these safe havens for the terrible amount of wealth that truly goes into fuelling a war ma-

chine. That is what is happening right now. A select few, very wealthy people are using their means to create harm: to murder innocent people and create division across what was historically, in the last 75 years at least, a peaceful Europe.

What we are seeing is the use of terrible capital that is harboured even in Canada, right now, in places such as Toronto and Vancouver. In real estate, people have been able to harbour this wealth. We have roles to play in order to target that wealth, sanction those individuals and truly bring them to justice. This is not a war against the Russian people. This is a war against tyrants like Putin and the oligarchs who support him and his efforts.

The Deputy Chair: It being 11:52 p.m., pursuant to the order adopted earlier today, the committee will rise.

(Government Business No. 10 reported)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:52 p.m.)

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